〈詠の二十六〉

ちゝやさし
覚(さと)られまじや
此(こ)のもわた

むげんのじゅうにん

アフタヌーンKC

無限の住人

26

沙村広明

アフタヌーン
KC654

無限の住人
26
沙村広明

講談社

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これは昔、ホームページとやらを作ろうと思っていたときにトップページに使うつもりで描いた絵です。
当時、妹が勤めていた会社の上司さんが
「無限の住人」を読んでくれてた縁で、
その人にお願いする予定でした。
「南国ムードの明るい絵ができたぜ！」と
満足して妹に渡したら
「……なんでこんなシャブ中患者みたいな目ェしてんの？」と
言われました。
せめて南国っぽく「マッシュルーム中毒患者」と
言ってほしかったです。

hiro@ki samura

むげんのじゅうにん

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203 〈Part 3〉 Exertion of Virility ❖ Chapter 177

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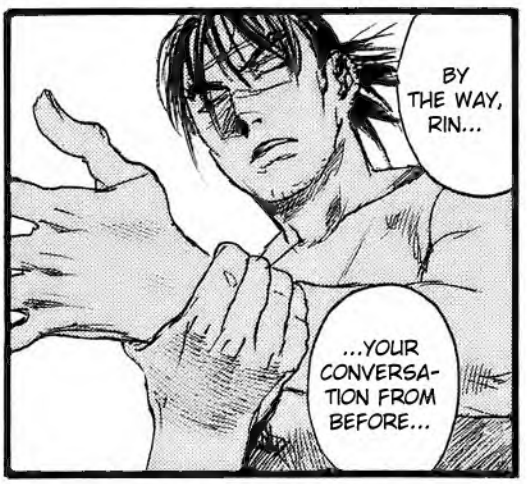
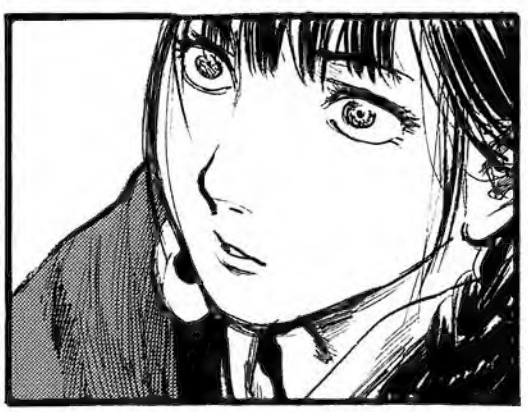
3 Dew on Spiderwebs ❖ Chapter 170

❖Chapter 170:❖
Dew on Spiderwebs

YOU SEEM TO BE WELL AGAIN.
I HAVE FULL POSSESSION OF MY STRENGTH AGAIN.
YEAH!

YOU REALLY PUT UP A FUSS...
...WHILE I WAS UNCONSCIOUS.


BY THE WAY, RIN...
...YOUR CONVERSATION FROM BEFORE...



YES.
I KNOW.
IT WAS RIDICULOUS.

AT THE MOMENT...

BUT I HAD NO CHOICE.

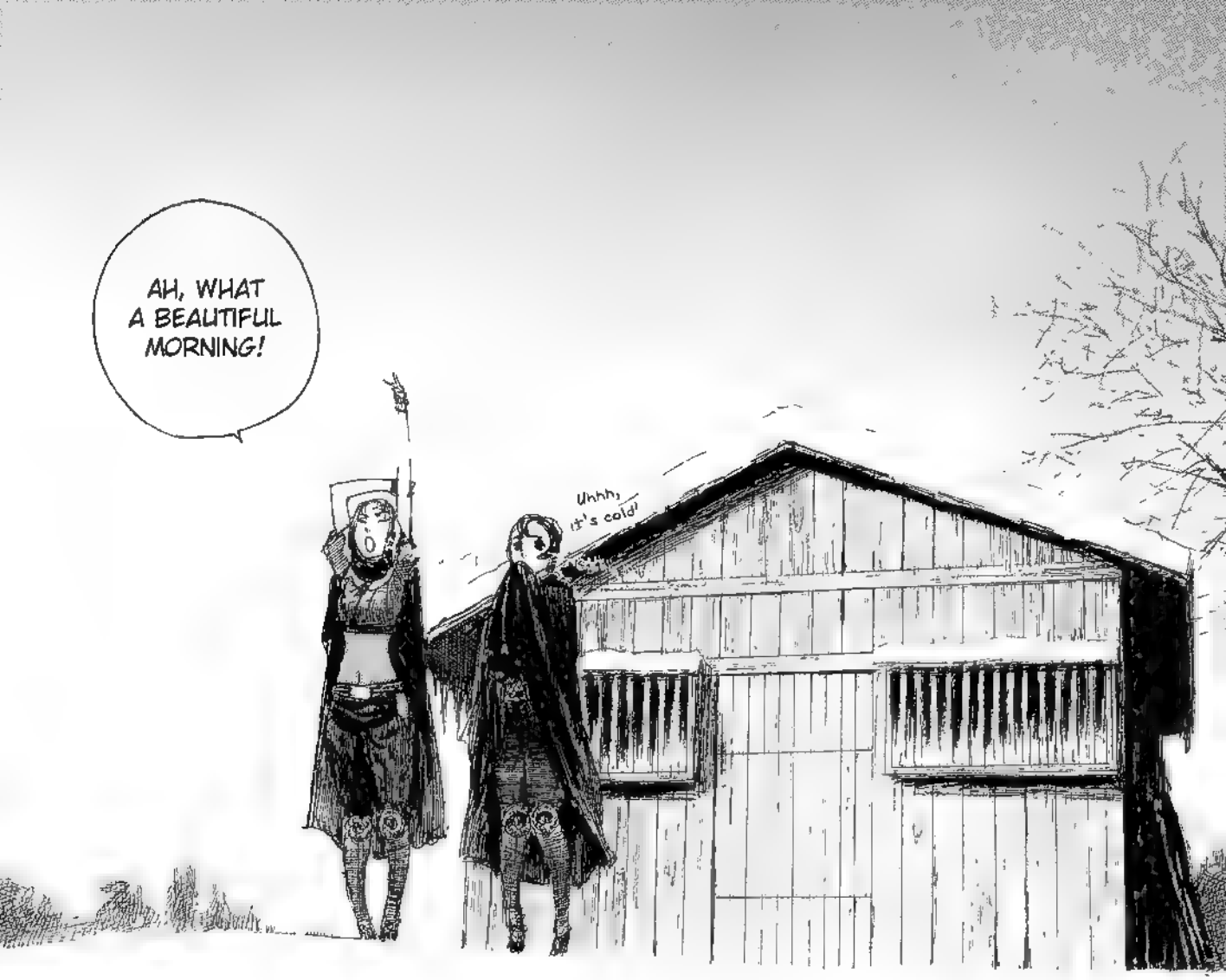
...I CAN'T DO ANYTHING...
...FOR THE BOY.

IF I'D MOVE BACK TO EDO...
...I WOULD BE ABLE TO HELP HIM SOMEHOW.
I WOULD EVEN BE WILLING TO RAISE HIM UP.
BUT...
...THAT WON'T BE POSSIBLE NOW.
ALL I CAN DO FOR HIM AT THE MOMENT, IS...
...FOOL HIM WITH DIRTY TRICKS AND PUT ON AN ACT...
...TO KEEP HIM AWAY FROM ME.
...THINGS HAD WORKED OUT DIFFERENTLY...
...AND IT HAD BEEN LIKE RENZO WISHED FOR...
ASSUMING THAT...
...JUST HYPOTHETICALLY...
...THEN SHIRA WOULD BE SIDE BY SIDE WITH HIM NOW, I GUESS.

IF SHIRA WAS STILL ALIVE THEN RENZO MIGHT HAVE EXPERIENCED WORSE THINGS.
I CAN'T IMAGINE WHAT CRUEL THINGS HE WOULD HAVE DONE TO THE BOY.
I KNOW.
EH?!
BUT SHIRA WAS...
...A STRAIGHT PERSON.
IF SHIRA HAD BEEN BEEN A BIT MORE POWERFUL...
...IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN THE OUTCOME RENZO HOPED FOR.
NOT AS RANDOM AS ME.
ARE YOU TOTALLY CRAZY?!

AND IT WAS THREE AGAINST ONE.
YEAH, THAT TOO.
HE WAS AN IMMORTAL MONSTER INCAPABLE OF FEELING PAIN. THAT WAS HIS DOOM.
AND IT WOULDN'T HAVE MATTERED IF SHIRA WAS STRONGER.
YEAH, YOU MIGHT BE RIGHT.
IF IT WAS LIKE WHAT RENZO WISHED FOR, THEN HIS FATHER WOULD BE AT HIS SIDE NOW.
I THINK YOU ARE FOOLING YOURSELF MORE THAN HIM.
RIN...
YOU ARE TALKING OF TRICKS AND ACTS...
...CAN'T BE TALKED OUT IN JUST ONE NIGHT.
ALL THE HATE OF A MAN THAT HAS LOST HIS FAMILY...

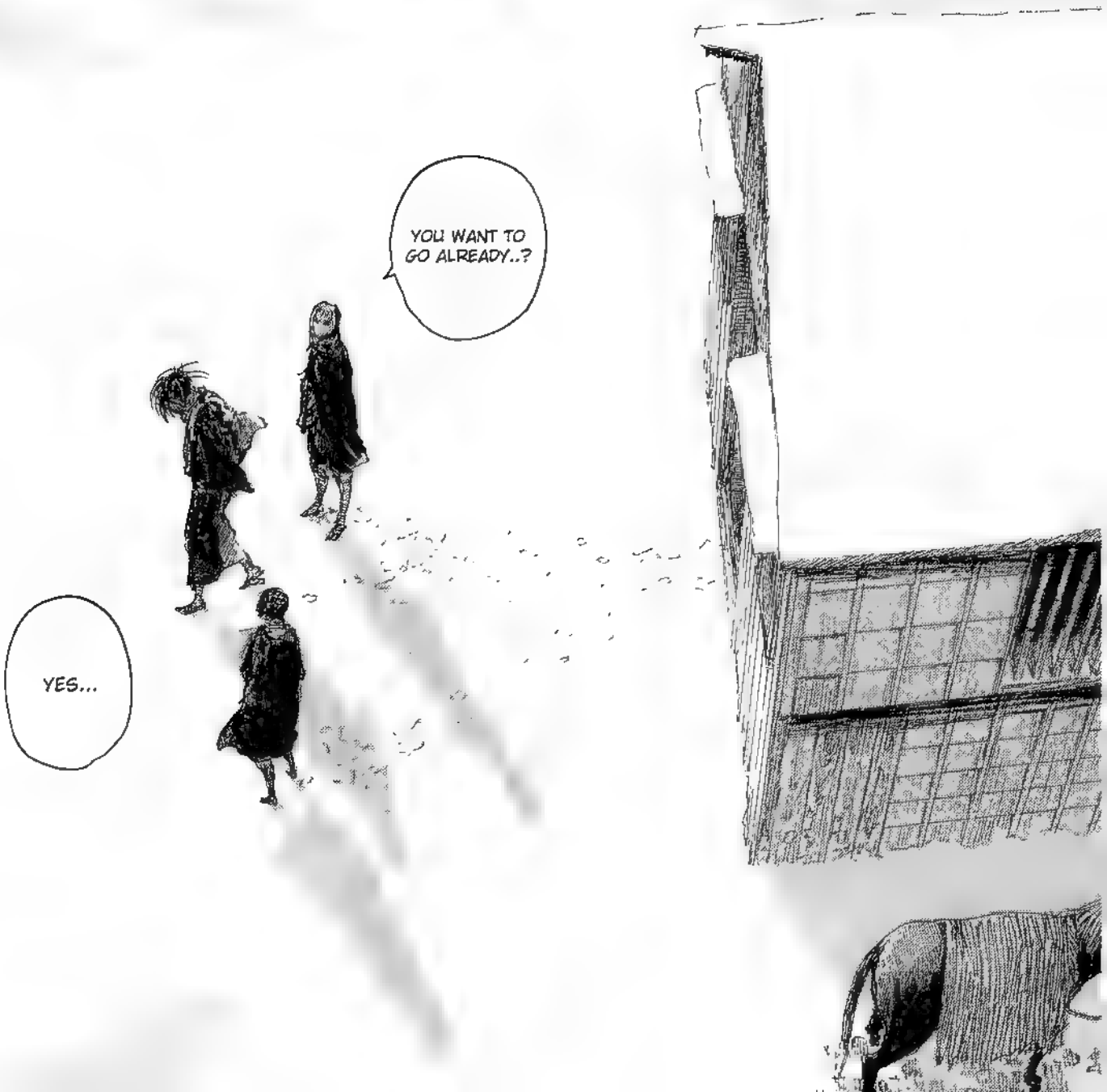
LIKE I DIDN'T HAVE ANY CHOICE BUT TO KILL SHIRA WHEN WE MET.
YOU COULDN'T HELP BUT KILL ARAYA KAWAKAMI IN THE END.
SO WHAT?
...TO BE HUNTED BY THE FAMILIES AND FRIENDS OF THE ONE WE KILLED FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES.
ALL WE CAN DO IS BRACE OURSELVES...
THAT'S FATE.
YES...
...TO EVEN THINK ABOUT FORGIVENESS.
IT IS PRESUMPTU-OUS...


AH, WHAT A BEAUTIFUL MORNING!
Uhhh, it's cold!

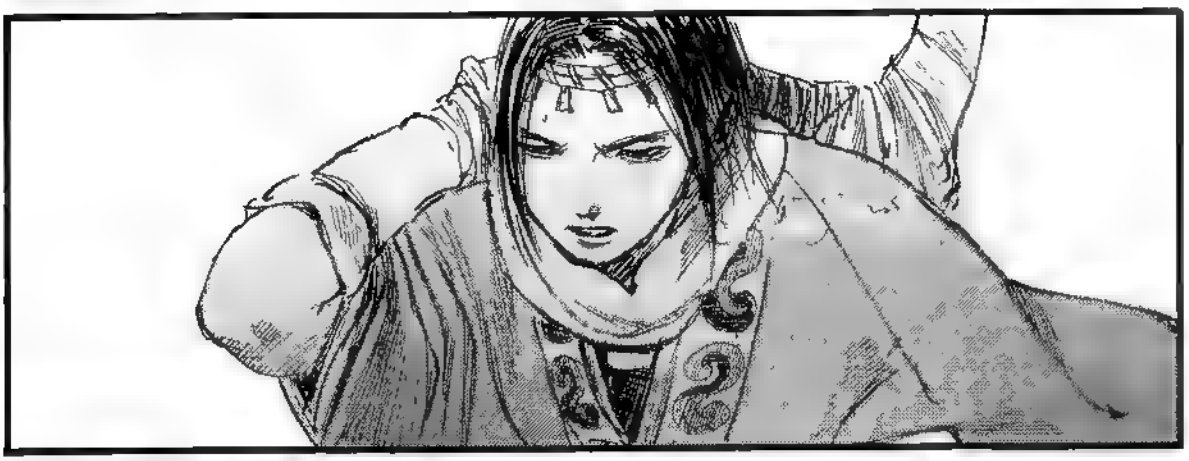
SORRY, TANPOPO, MEGURO..!
WOULD YOU LOOK AFTER RENZO FROM NOW ON?
OKAY!

THEN WE'LL BORROW US A HORSE, MAGATSU.
WHAT?!

KAGEHISA ANOTSU HAS ORDERED US TO COME TO HITACHI AS SOON AS POSSIBLE...
I HAVE TO GET THERE FAST!
BULL-SHIT!
BUT I CAN'T STAY ABSENT FROM THE LAST BATTLE AS A LEADING MEMBER OF ITTO-RYU!
DON'T TELL ME YOU STILL REGARD YOURSELF AS A MEMBER OF ITTO-RYU?
YOU TOOK PART IN A FIGHT OF ONE AGAINST THREE, REMEMBER?
UNGH...
THAT GUY WAS IMMORTAL AND I WASN'T!
DOESN'T MATTER! YOU ARE WAY TOO NAIVE!
FURTHER-MORE... LOOK AT YOUR WOUNDS!
DO YOU THINK THAT THOSE ARE ALREADY HEALED? YOU'LL HAVE TO SEE A DOCTOR OR YOU WILL LOSE SOME LIMBS!
A WRECK LIKE YOU WOULD ONLY BE A BURDEN TO ANOTSU!
.....
KCH!
YES, UNDER-STOOD! YOU SON OF A BITCH!
IN FACT I ONLY HAVE TO GET ME A HORSE AT THE NEXT POSTAL STATION.
BAH! CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'LL GET AWAY SCOT FREE...


YOU WANT TO GO ALREADY..?
YES...

FURTHER-MORE...
...IF THERE'S SOMETHING SHE CAN'T BEAR, THEN IT'S CONSIDER-ATENESS.
HER HEALING CAN TAKE LONGER.
SHE DOESN'T NEED TO WIELD A SWORD IN HITACHI.
WOULDN'T IT BE BETTER TO WAIT UNTIL SHE CAN WALK AGAIN..?
RIN'S FROSTBITE HASN'T HEALED YET.
THAT'S HER ONLY CERTITUDE.
SHE'S THE ONE WHO WANTS TO HUNT DOWN ANOTSU UNTIL THE END OF THE WORLD.
YES...



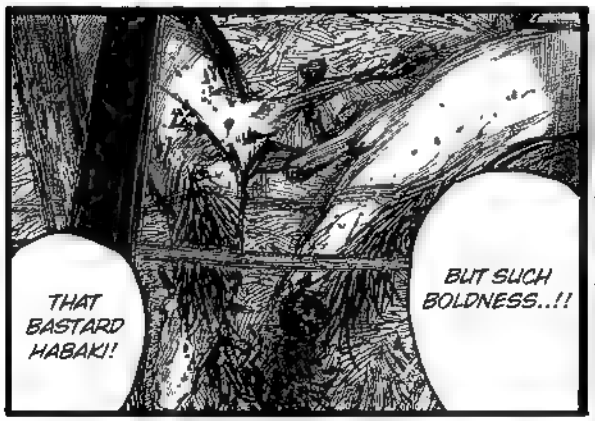
WELL, YOU KNOW...

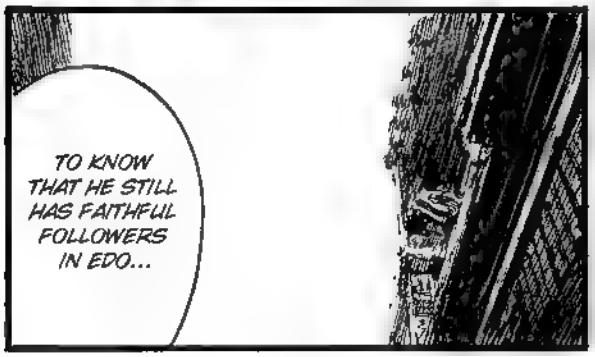
SOSUKE ABAYAMA HAS RESERVED SOME HORSES...
OH...

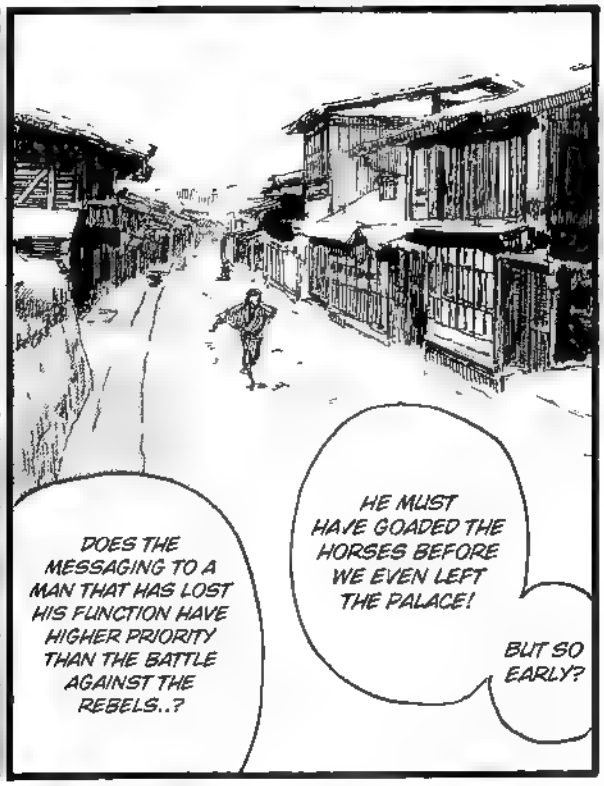
EXCUSE ME!

AN HOUR AGO, A SAMURAI CAME...
HE SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL COMPENSATE ME...
HE ONLY SPARED ONE HORSE AND RODE AWAY
.....
DAMN!
!!

...KAGIMURA HABAKI WOULD LEARN ABOUT OUR ASSAULT ON THE PALACE EVENTUALLY.
I KNEW THAT...


THAT BASTARD HABAKI!
BUT SUCH BOLDNESS..!!


TO KNOW THAT HE STILL HAS FAITHFUL FOLLOWERS IN EDO...


DOES THE MESSAGING TO A MAN THAT HAS LOST HIS FUNCTION HAVE HIGHER PRIORITY THAN THE BATTLE AGAINST THE REBELS..?
HE MUST HAVE GOADED THE HORSES BEFORE WE EVEN LEFT THE PALACE!
BUT SO EARLY?

HANG IN THERE, ABAYAMA-DONO!

AN OBSERVATION BY HORSE..?
WE ARE BEING FOLLOWED. THE HORSEMAN THERE...

FROM THEIR POSITION...
I DOUBT THAT.

CAN'T THEY AFFORD NINJAS ANYMORE?

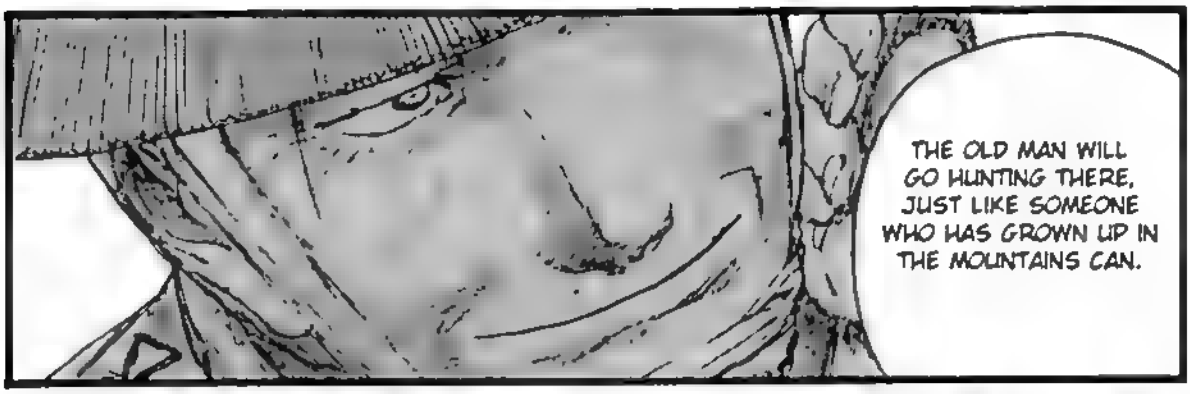
THEY WANT TO KILL US ALL IN THE END ANYWAY.

IF WE'RE FOUND OUT BEING OBSERVED DOESN'T MATTER.
...IT'S ENOUGH TO KNOW OUR NUMBERS AND WHERE WE ARE GOING.

ITTO-RYU HAS TWELVE FIGHTERS AND ROKKI-DAN PROBABLY ABOUT THIRTY.
YES.
ABAYAMA-DONO...
...SHOULD WE CHANGE TO THE DISCUSSED METHODS?
IF WE WANNA DO THAT...
WE HAVE TO REDUCE THEIR NUMBERS SOMEHOW OR IT WILL GET TOUGH.
...THEN WE SHOULD USE THE CHANCE THAT THEY'RE OBSERVING US.
RIGHT.

WHAT IS THAT..?
ABAYAMA-SAMA...
HM?
WHERE IS KOJI GOING TO ALONE?
ONE OF THEM IS LEAVING THE GROUP..?

KOJI'S HOME IS THERE.
AT THE SOUTHERN END OF THE TSUKUBA MOUNTAIN IS A SMALL HAMLET.


THE OLD MAN WILL GO HUNTING THERE, JUST LIKE SOMEONE WHO HAS GROWN UP IN THE MOUNTAINS CAN.

THAT ALSO APPLIES TO US...
EVERYONE CAUGHT UP IN THIS HUNT WILL BECOME HIS PREY.

WHAT? A SINGLE PERSON HAS LEFT THE GROUP?
HM?

IT COULD BE A TRAP!
MAYBE BECAUSE THEY HAVE SEEN OUR HORSEMAN...

BOTH ARE HUNTED AND KILLED!
BUT THAT DOESN'T MATTER. BOTH SIDES ARE ITTO-RYU.
I KNOW THAT.

I WILL GO.
IF IT'S A TRAP OR NOT, HOWEVER..
HABAKI-SAMA...

HABAKI-SAMA!
BUT TAKE SOMEONE WITH YOU..!
YES.
.....
...FOR A SNIPER WHO KILLS FROM FAR AWAY IT DOESN'T MATTER.

I WILL GO WITH HIM!

GOOD, THEN YOU GO!
THANK YOU VERY MUCH!
...

FUKADA, ISHIHARA, HIRAYAMA AND ABIRU OF THE HEBIGUMI!
YOU WILL ACCOM-PANY THE TWO OF THE HANA-GUMI!
THE REST OF YOU WILL CHASE THE MAIN GROUP ON THE MITO-PATH!

MASTER KASHIN..?!

AH, IT'S YOU MUSUKE!
WELL, IS YOUR FATHER STILL ALIVE?
Y-YES, THANKS FOR ASKING!

WE'LL OPEN THE POTS. PREPARE EVERYTHING RIGHT AWAY!

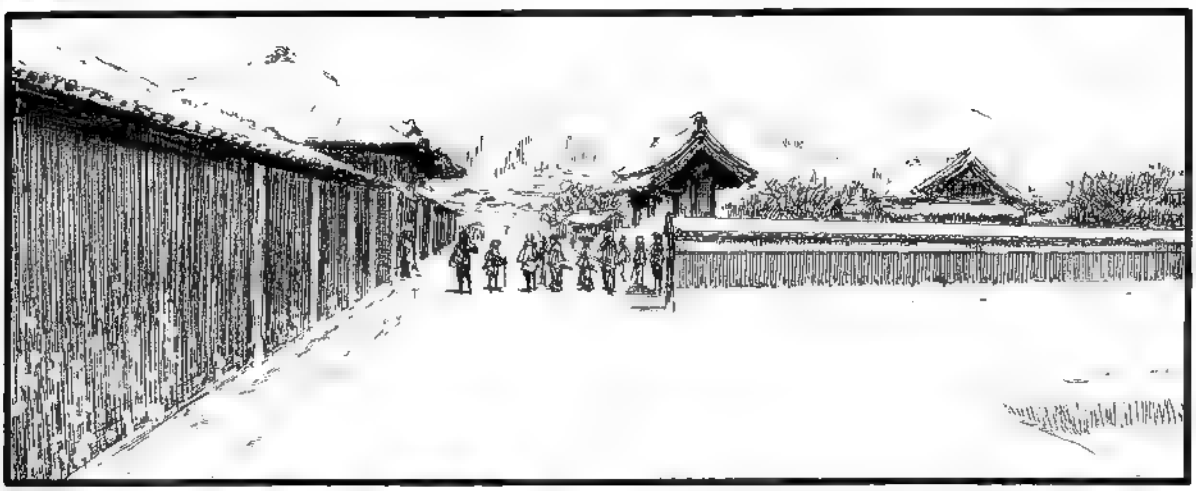
YOUR FATHER IS KINDA WEIRD.
USUALLY YOU WOULDN'T SEND YOUR DAUGHTER INTO A POSSIBLE TRAP.

YOU ARE HABARAKI'S DAUGHTER, RIGHT..!?
YES, WHY?

NOW I'M VERY HAPPY.
I REGARD THAT AS A PROOF OF HIS TRUST IN ME.
I HAVE BEGGED HIM TO TREAT ME LIKE THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE HANAGUMI.
BAN-SAN!
HIS LOVE AS A FATHER IS REALLY REMARKABLE IF HE ACTS LIKE THAT WITH KAGEHISA ANOTSU BEFORE HIS EYES.
WHY DO YOU THINK THAT?
OF COURSE IT'S POSSIBLE BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN THAT...
I UNDERSTAND. OKAY...
DO YOU WANT TO INSULT MY FATHER?

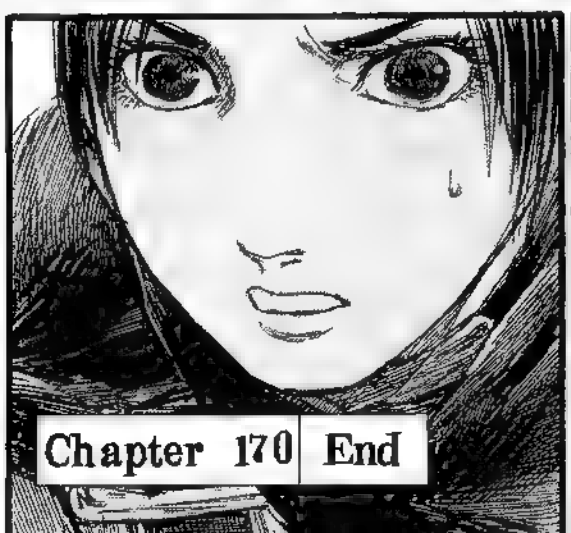
TSS! FATHER STAYS FATHER AND DAUGHTER STAYS DAUGHTER...
WHAT WAS THAT GLANCE..?
BAN-SAN! LOOK!
!
There's no ambush here...
HE DOESN'T SEEM TO HAVE NOTICED US...
HM..? YOU MEAN THE PERSON STANDING THERE..?

WHAT'S THAT..?!
NO DOUBT, IT'S HIM...
HM? HEY...
sketch of Tanpopo
old man, name unknown



BUT HE WAS ALONE THE WHOLE TIME..!
DAMN IT! WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?!
THERE WERE DIFFERENT MEN...
THAT'S THE MAIN GROUP!!

ONE, TWO...


Chapter 170 End

JUST DON'T GET ME LOST..!
SIX OF THEM, OH WELL...

Chapter 171
Pots
-Part 1-

WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE?!

IT'S MORE LIKE "INTO THE WOODS" THAN "UP THE MOUNTAIN".
THEY WALKED UP THE MOUNTAIN WHERE THERE'S NO PATH OR STEPS AT ALL!
BAN-SAN...
...BUT IT WOULD BE FOOLISH JUST TO FOLLOW IT WITHOUT A PLAN!
THIS INVITATION SHOULD BE WELCOMED BY US...
WHY DO YOU THINK THAT?
MAYBE MOST OF THEM ARE JUST FAKE ITTO-RYU.

BUT THE PEOPLE HERE DIDN'T HAVE THE TIME TO INSTALL THOSE.
THEY INSTALLED SEVERAL DIFFERENT TYPES OF BOOBY TRAPS BY HANABUSAS COMMAND THERE, NETS, TRAP DOORS AND IRON JAWS.
THOSE ARE THE KIND OF TRAPS I CAN IMAGINE.
LET'S TAKE FUKIAGE IN THE PALACE OF EDO FOR AN EXAMPLE...
BUT THINK FURTHER BAN- SAN! THE PEOPLE HERE ENTERED THIS GROUND FOR THE FIRST TIME... JUST AS WE DO.
I THINK SO AS WELL.
Why the cigar?
MIGHT HAVE BEEN DONE BY COMRADES HERE.
ONLY THE ONES WHO'VE SET UP THE TRAPS WOULD BE ABLE TO GO THROUGH THEM RISK-FREE.
...WHERE YOU CAN'T DISTINGUISH ANY GADGETS HIDDEN IN THE GROUND...
PLUS, THE SNOW...
EVEN IF COMRADES HAVE PUT UP TRAPS AND INFORMED THEM, WOULD THEY BE ABLE TO MOVE FREELY?

SUCH A TRAP SHOULDN'T BE A PROBLEM FOR US.
YOU DON'T NEED SPECIAL PREPARATION FOR THAT.
BUT THERE ARE SEVERAL OTHER POSSIBLE TRAPS SET UP HERE.
PERHAPS THEY WANT TO SURROUND US WITH NUMERICAL ADVANTAGE?
HEY..!
YOU ONLY FOUGHT ONE TIME AGAINST THIS ENEMY AND YOU ALREADY THINK THAT YOU KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT THEM..?!
...EVEN IF THEY OUTNUMBER US.
IF THEY AREN'T REAL ITTO-RYU THEN WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO FIGHT THEM BACK...
REAL ITTO-RYU...
...WOULD NEVER USE SUCH A STRATEGY.

WHY SHOULD WE ENDANGER OUR LIVES TO HUNT DOWN FAKE ITTO-RYUS?
THEN, WHAT WE ARE DOING HERE DOESN'T MAKE MUCH SENSE.
OKAY, LET'S ASSUME THESE GUYS ARE JUST STOOGES FOR THE TWELVE THAT ARE ON THE MITO-PATH...
...THE ITTO-RYU HAVE NINE PEOPLE LEFT. FOUR OF THEM HAVE ASSAULTED THE PALACE.
ACCOR-DING TO MITAKE...
TSS!
ARE YOU SURE..?
THE OLD MAN IS AN ITTO-RYU WITHOUT DOUBT.
HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT THE OLD MAN IS A REAL ONE?
...HALF CONSISTED OF FAKES FROM THE BEGINNING.
THAT MEANS, OF THE GROUP OF ITTO-RYU ON THE MITO-PATH...
BUT THE REASON WE ARE HERE IS CLEAR... TO KILL HIM!
I DON'T KNOW IT!

Uuups
BAN-SAN...
YOUR LIFE IS IN HABAKI-SAMA'S HANDS AND THEREFORE YOU WILL FOLLOW HIM!
Uh.
GOOD.
YEAH, YEAH, UNDERSTOOD.

WHAT SHALL WE DO?
SPLIT UP AND STEP INTO THE TRAP BRAVELY?
WE'LL WALK IN A ROW.
THAT'LL MINIMIZE OUR LOSSES IN CASE OF AN AMBUSH.

COME ON NOW!!
QUITE RANDOM...
ROCK-SCISSOR-PAPER?
W-WHO'LL GO FIRST?
WHAT?!
HEY, YOU'LL WALK UP FRONT!

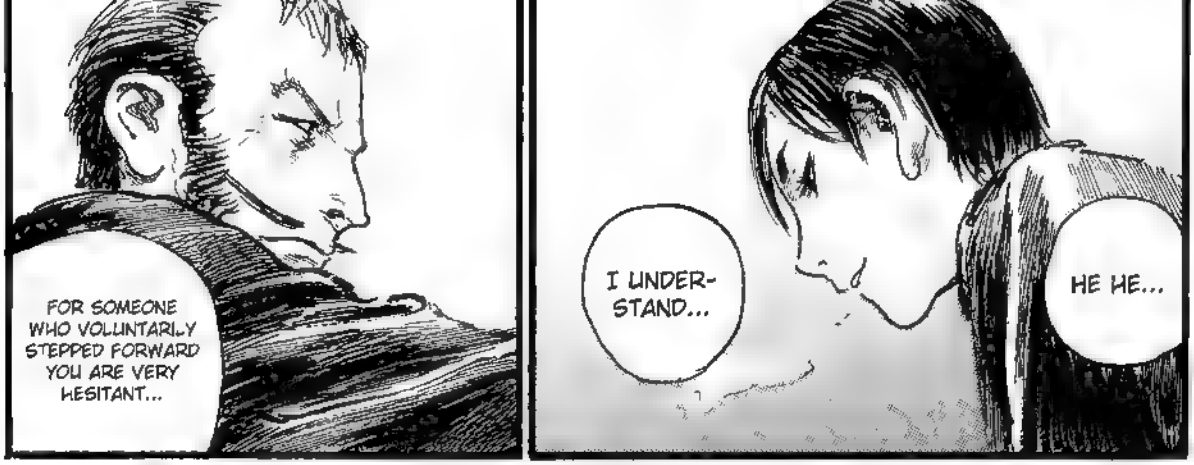
NO.
YOU'LL BE NEXT!
HII...

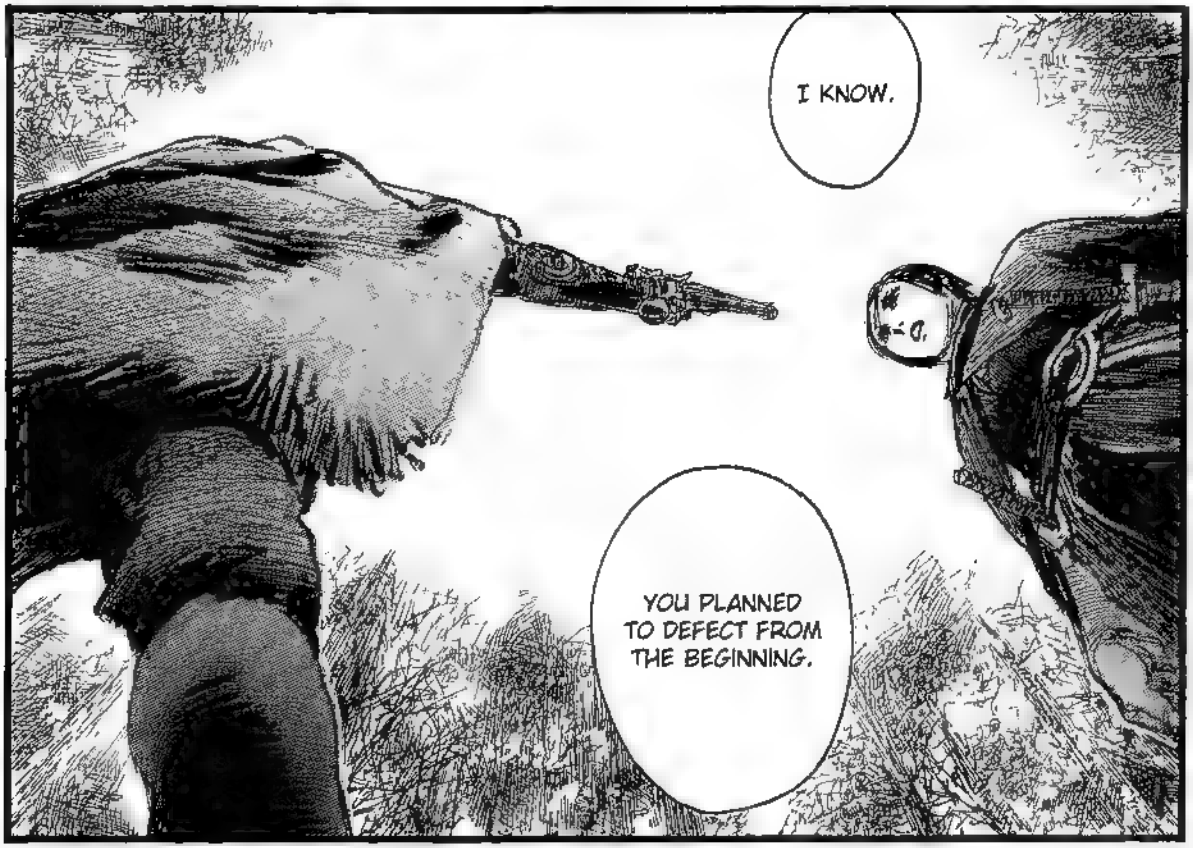
YOU DON'T WANT TO, OR YOU CAN'T

WE CAN'T LEAVE THAT TO A GIRL, C'MON, GO!
NO, BAN-SAN, AFTER YOU.

THE REAR GUARD IS ENDANGERED AS WELL.
I'LL DO THAT.

I SAID YOU SHOULD GO!
WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO BE..?


FOR SOMEONE WHO VOLUNTARILY STEPPED FORWARD YOU ARE VERY HESITANT...
I UNDER-STAND...
HE HE...


I KNOW.
YOU PLANNED TO DEFECT FROM THE BEGINNING.

BUT YOU HAD TO BUTT IN!
THAT'S WHY I WANTED TO GO ALONE TOO!

FRANKLY SPEAKING, I CAN'T FOLLOW...
...YOUR FATHER ANYMORE.

...AND IF NOT WE WILL BE EXECUTED.
THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO SAY ABOUT ROKKI-DAN!

WHAT THE HELL IS ROKKI-DAN?
JUST A BUNCH OF DEATH CONVICTS, SET AFTER ITTO-RYU. IF WE'LL BRING THE HEAD OF ANOTSU WE WILL RECEIVE AMNESTY...

I THINK...

IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW MANY ITTO-RYU WILL BE KILLED.
ONLY KAGEHISA ANOTSU MATTERS.
THOUGH HE'S NOT EVEN PART OF THE GROUP OF TWELVE ON THE MITO-PATH!

...WE SHOULD HAVE RE-VERSED...
...WHEN WE ENCOUNTERED MITAKE.

BUT WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO US?!
WHY DIDN'T WE JUST RETURN AFTER ANOTSU'S AMBUSH ON THE PALACE BECAME PUBLIC?
MAYBE HE JUST WANTS TO LET ANOTSU FEEL WHAT IT'S LIKE TO LOSE COMRADES WITHOUT BEING CAPABLE TO AVERT IT?
WHY IS IT MORE IMPORTANT TO KILL THOSE TWELVE?
EVEN IF ANOTSU WANTS TO...
WILL HE REALLY COME?
OR WILL ANOTSU MEET HIS COMRADES AGAIN AT ANY RATE..?
I DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT KAGEHISA ANOTSU
BUT I'M CERTAIN THAT HE'LL COME.
...MAYBE HE WAS WOUNDED DURING THE AMBUSH?!
OUR DEATH PENALTY WON'T CHANGE THAT!
MAYBE HE DIED SOMEWHERE IN A ROADSIDE DITCH?

ALWAY TALKING "MY FATHER DID THIS AND THAT"..!
KCH! STUPID GIRL!
HABAKI-SAMA HAS MET ANOTSU FACE TO FACE. BECAUSE OF THAT EXPERIENCE HE HAS MADE HIS DECISION.
I COULDN'T REALIZE THIS IDEA IN EDO...
...BUT IT WON'T BE DIFFICULT TO DO THAT HERE.
BUT LET'S DROP THAT!
I WILL NOW TAKE FLIGHT.
I WILL PURSUE YOU!
NO CHANCE!
I WILL SHOOT YOU IN THE LEG NOW.
I DON'T WANT TO KILL YOU UNNECESSARILY BUT THAT SHOULD BE TOLERABLE.
WHAT ABOUT THE HEBIGUMI GROUP?
FORGET ABOUT THEM! THEY WILL KICK THE BUCKET HERE.

AFTER ALL...
...YOU WON'T LEAVE THIS FOREST UNHARMED.
DON'T BE MAD AT ME, LITTLE GIRL!
PFF...
!?
WHAT'S SO FUNNY?!
HA HA HAHA HA..!
BWAH HAH...
...I'M JUST ADMIRING MY FATHER AGAIN.
OH...

.....!?
...HE PREDICTED THIS EXACT DEVELOPMENT.
YOU KNOW...
...IS SHISHIYA ARASHINO, WHO WON'T BE ABLE TO FLEE BECAUSE OF HIS APPEARANCE.
...THE ONLY ONE OF HANAGUMI THAT HAS MY FATHER'S TRUST...
TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH...
THAT'S WHY THERE SHOULD ALWAYS BE SOMEONE TO MONITOR OVER THE HANAGUMI AT SMALL CAMPAIGNS.
EITHER ARASHINO, MITAKE OR ME.

SHOULD I TELL YOU WHAT I MEANT WITH THAT?
I SAID BEFORE...
...THAT I'M HAPPY ABOUT THE TRUST MY FATHER HAS IN ME.
!!
SO THAT'S WHY YOU ARE HERE...
KRCH!
HM, I SEE...
THEN I HAVE TO CHANGE MY PLAN...
I WILL SHOOT YOU STRAIGHT IN THE HEAD.
HE TRUSTS THAT...
...I'M CAPABLE OF STOPPING YOU!

...THERE'S ALWAYS THE DANGER OF GETTING KILLED FROM BEHIND.
REGARDING GUNS...

UNDER THESE CIRCUM-STANCES...
...AND YOUR HANDS.
...I CAN SEE YOUR EYES...
BUT FROM FACE TO FACE AT THIS DISTANCE...

...I WILL BE ABLE TO KILL YOU.
YOU THINK SO..?

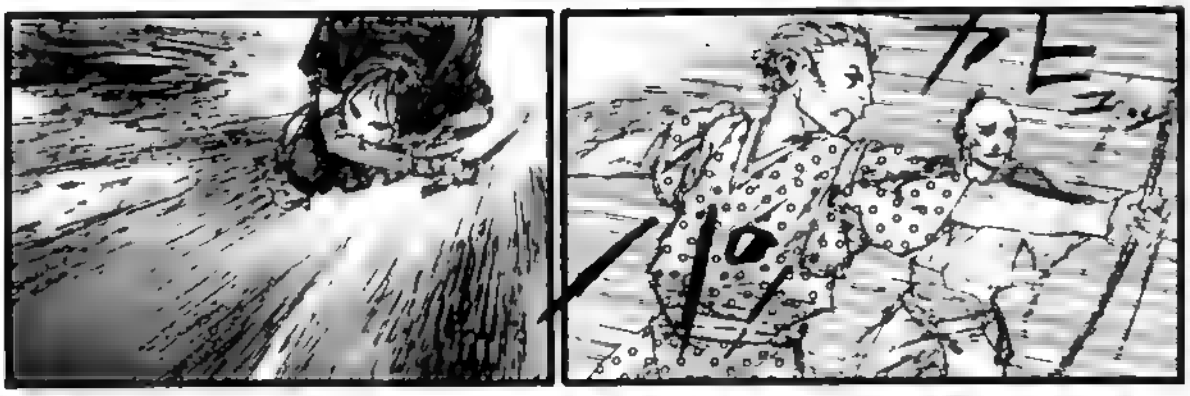
THE SCREAMS OF THE HE-BIGUMI..?
ARRGH!
UAA-AH!

DAMN..!

ばか
WHY DID YOU..?
STUPID QUES-TION!
IF YOU ARE DEAD THEY WILL PICK UP ON ME!
DROP THERE, STUPID GIRL!

AH!
DON'T BE CRAZY!
PUU-UH..!

KCH..!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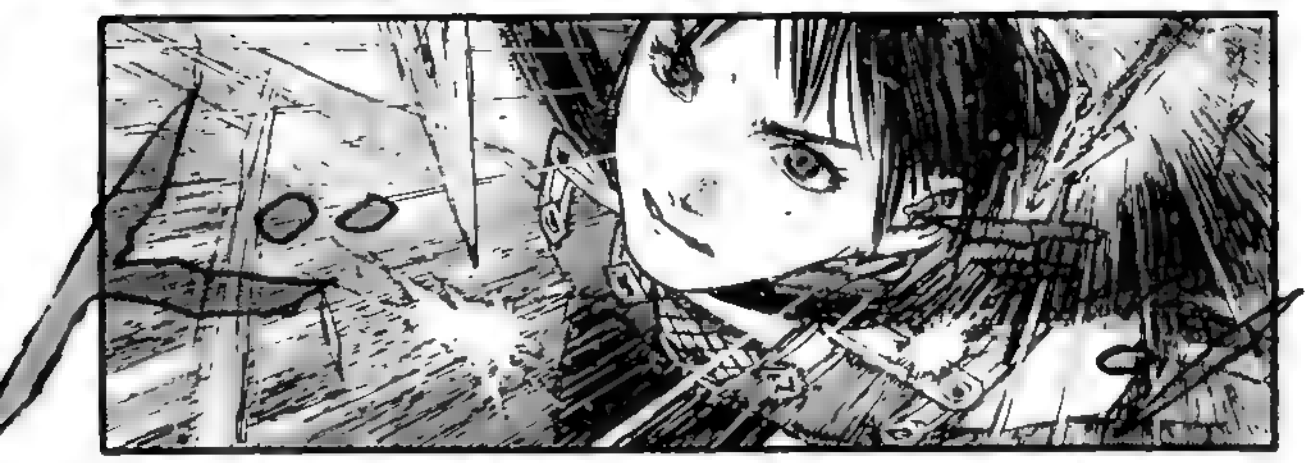


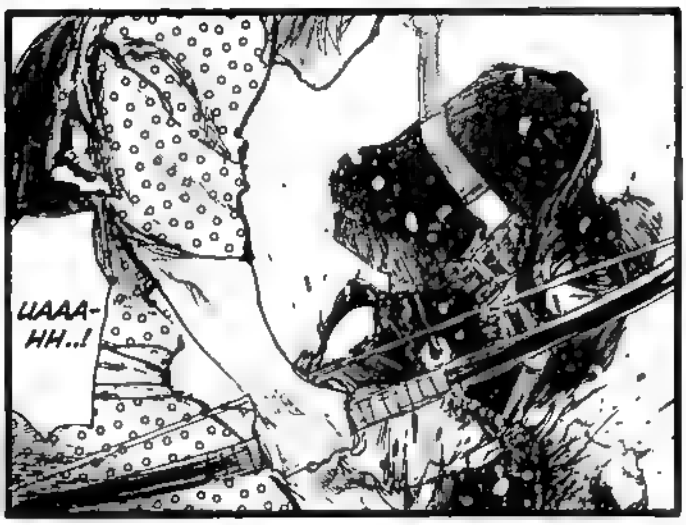
OH?!
INSANE..!

WHAT..?

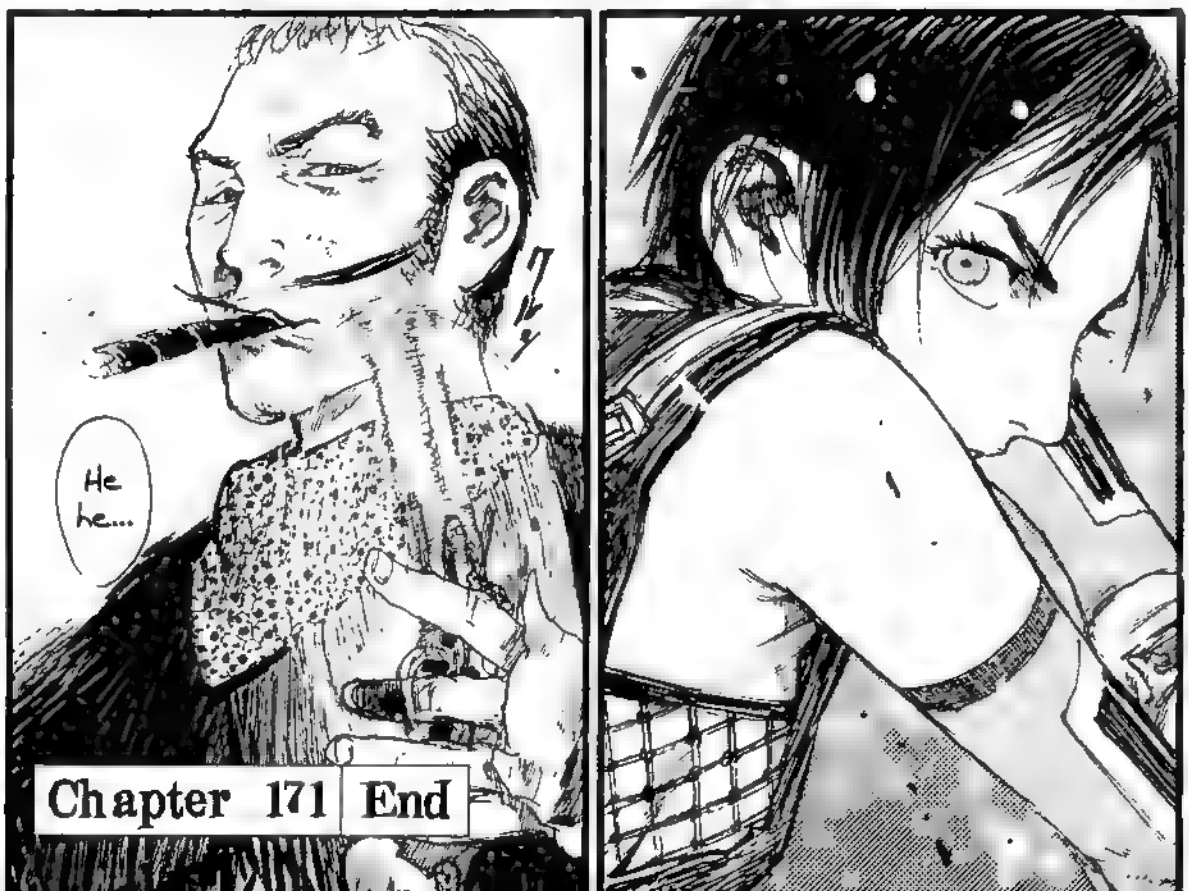
IMPOS-
SIBLE!
WHA
..?!

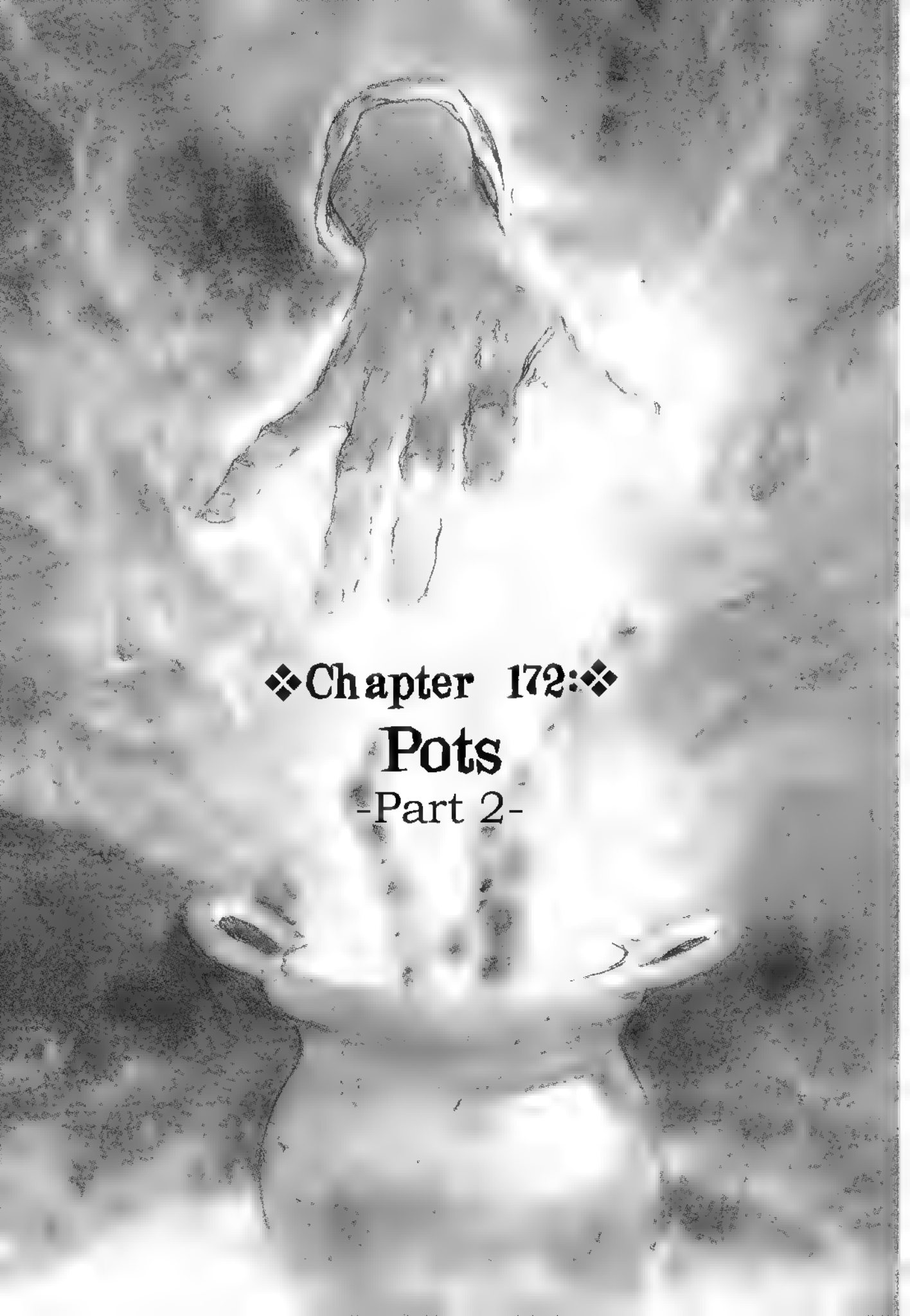
ｱｱｱｱ!!

DAMN IT!


UAAA-HH..!

!?


He he...
Chapter 171 End



❖Chapter 172:❖
Pots
-Part 2-

THE NEXT ...

TOO FAR AWAY...!
KOOOSH
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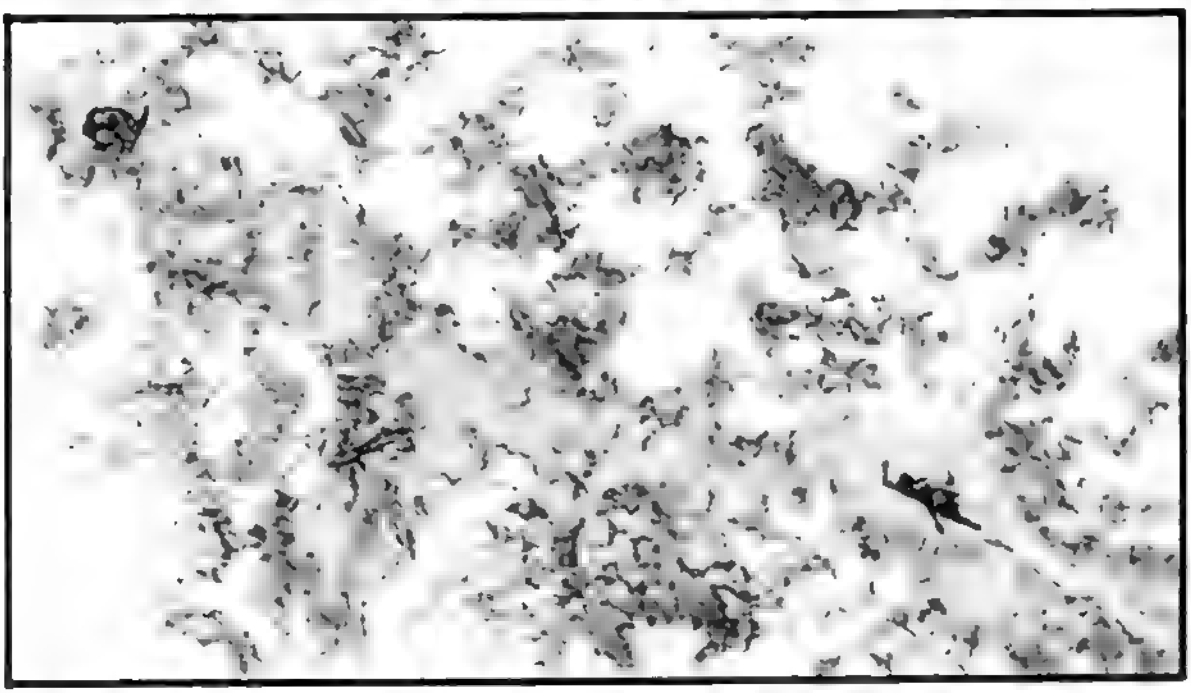
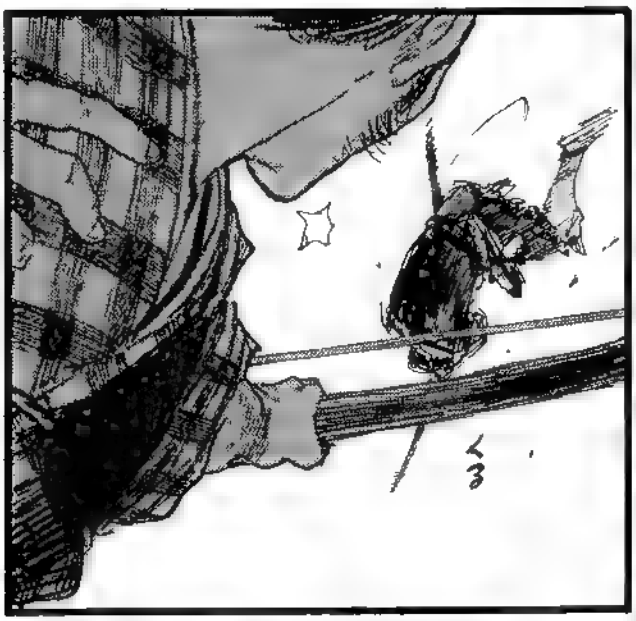
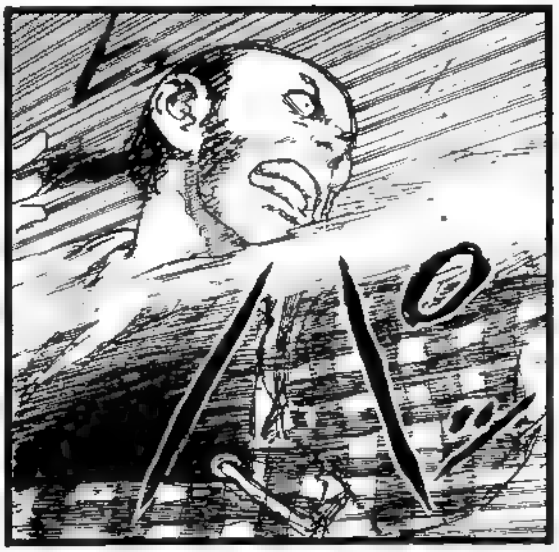


TAK!
WHA..?
NO...
NO WAY!!

KYAAAAAAAAAAH!!





AT LEAST I HAVE A MOMENT FOR RELOADING.
...
NEXT ONE

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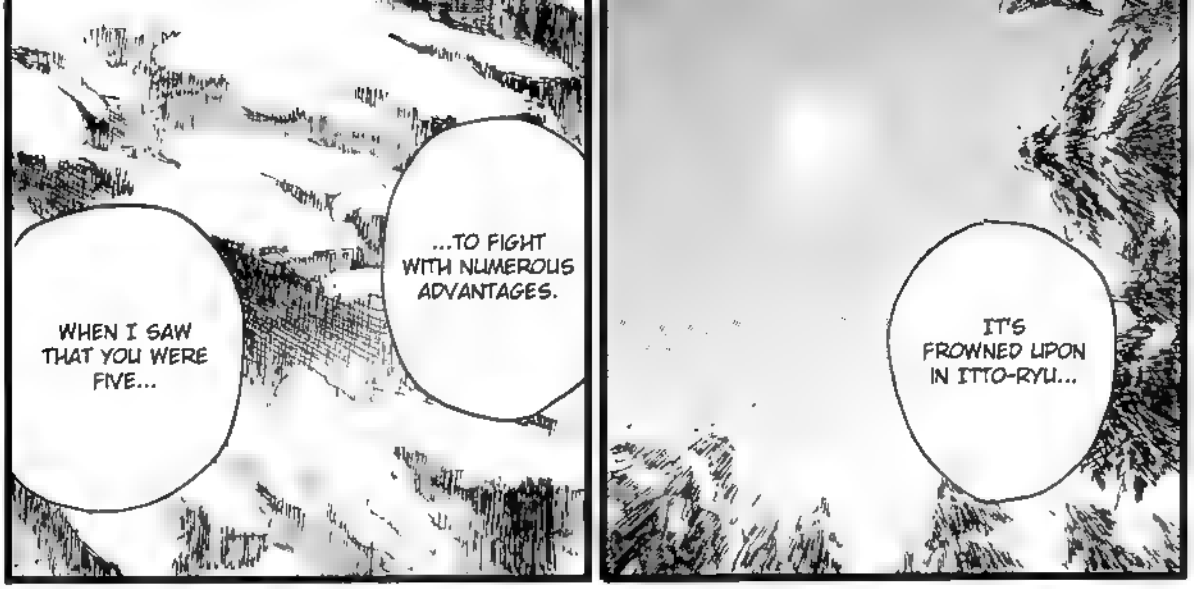
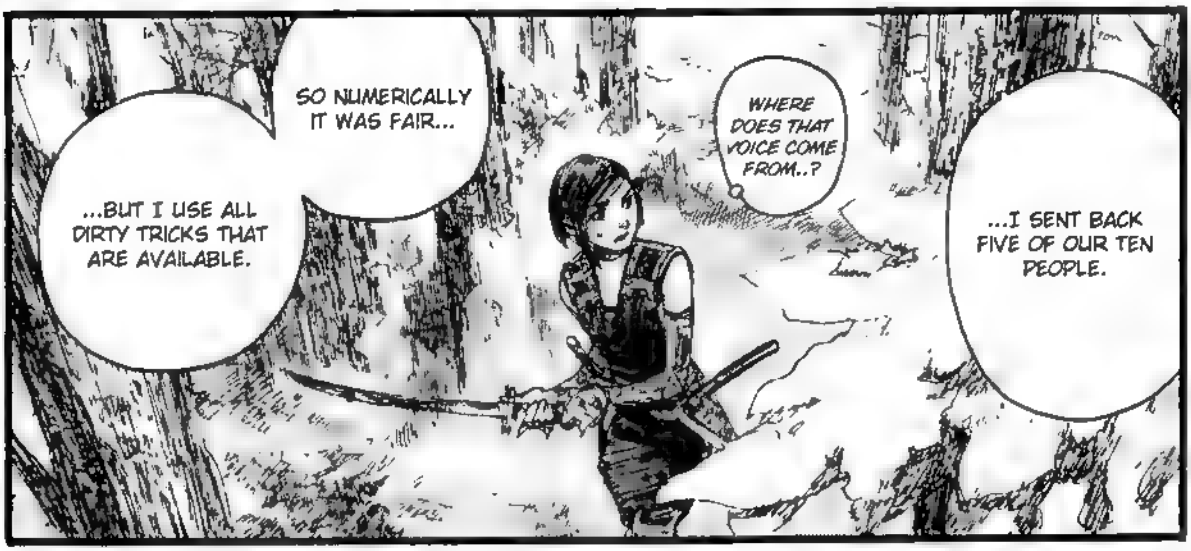
DON'T WORRY!
THERE'S NO ONE LEFT EXCEPT ME!
……!!


WHEN I SAW THAT YOU WERE FIVE...
...TO FIGHT WITH NUMEROUS ADVANTAGES.
IT'S FROWNED UPON IN ITTO-RYU...


SO NUMERICALLY IT WAS FAIR...
...BUT I USE ALL DIRTY TRICKS THAT ARE AVAILABLE.
WHERE DOES THAT VOICE COME FROM..?
...I SENT BACK FIVE OF OUR TEN PEOPLE.

I DIDN'T EXPECT SUCH A DEVELOPMENT THOUGH.
THAT PISTOL SNIPER IS REALLY SOMETHING!
I'M REALLY SURPRISED TO HAVE LOST ALL MY COMRADES ALREADY.

SO THAT'S ROKKI-DAN'S LEVEL..?
I HAVE TO REVISE MY PREJUDICES...
BAN-SAN!

I ONLY WANTED TO ASK YOU SOMETHING...
OH, I'M SORRY!
HEY, DON'T RUN WHERE TRAPS COULD BE!
OR IT WILL GET ME TOO!

BUT A SNIPER OF YOUR FORMAT?
OF COURSE, I'M THANKFUL FOR IT.
WHY DID YOU JUST FIGHT TO SUPPORT ME?

OH, PLEASE EXCUSE MYSELF AGAIN!
BECAUSE A DUMB GIRL HAS TRIGGERED ALL THE TRAPS, THAT'S WHY!!
I DIDN'T HAVE TIME TO AIM AT ENEMIES AT ALL!
ALONE HOW YOU KILLED THAT ARCHER...
WHY..?

HOW ARROGANT I WAS!
NOT BECAUSE HE WAS ASSURE THAT I'D BE ABLE TO DEFEAT HIM...
NOW I UNDERSTAND WHY MY FATHER ALLOWED ME TO WATCH OVER BAN...
MAY IT BE KINDHEART-EDNESS...
OR COWARDICE, I CAN'T TELL.
...BUT BECAUSE THIS PERSON WOULD NEVER KILL AN ALLY TO FLEE HIMSELF.
BAN-SAN!
EVEN NOW...
IF BAN WOULD BE SOMEONE WHO KILLS WITHOUT HESITATION...
...THEN HE WOULDN'T HAVE TALKED TO ME LIKE THAT BEFORE WE ENTERED THE FOREST.

I DON'T GET THIS GIRL...
MY ABILITIES...
...CAN'T MATCH WITH YOURS IN ANY WAY. I EXPERIENCED THAT DURING THIS FIGHT.
PLEASE HELP ME...
I WANT TO APOLOGIZE TO YOU FOR MY WORDS.
I'M NOT ABLE TO DO WITHOUT YOU!
...AND THE THREE ONES OF THE HEBIGUMI!
...WITH THE SEARCH AFTER THE LAST ITTO-RYU...
WE WILL SEE WHEN WE SUCCEED.
SO, WHEN THIS IS DONE I CAN GO?
.....

OKAY, HALF OF IT.
.....
I'LL HELP YOU PAYING THEM BACK FOR THE AMBUSH.
AGREED?
YOU CAN SEARCH FOR THE HEBIGUMI GUYS YOURSELF.
THEN WE'LL DO IT LIKE THIS...

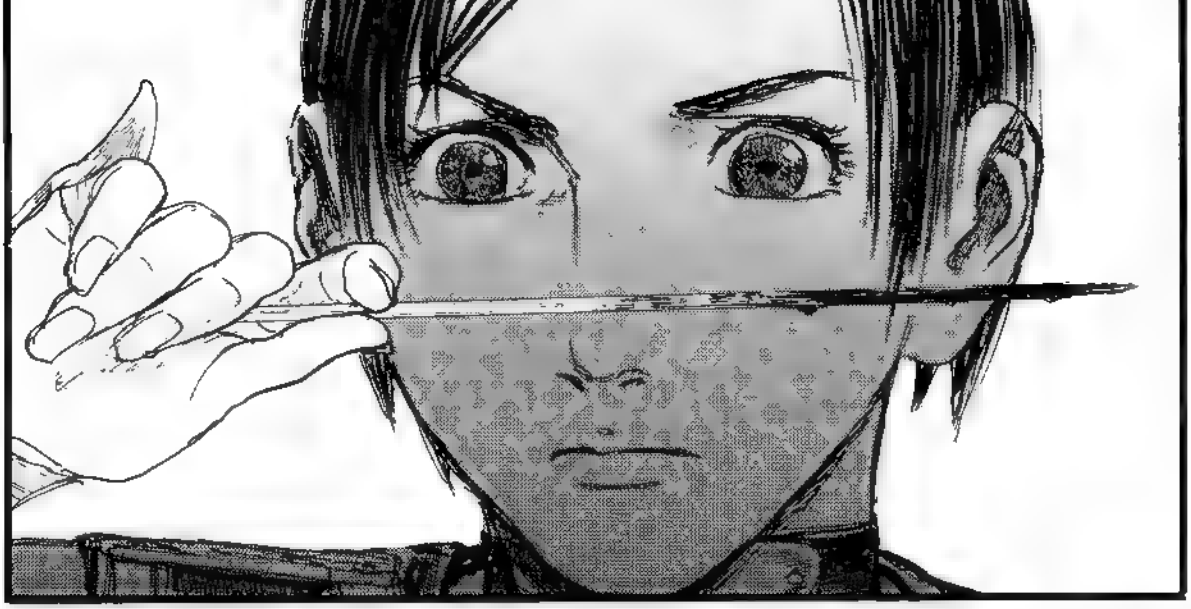
WHAT'S WITH THE TRAPS?
DO YOU REALLY THINK IT'S ONLY ONE LEFT?
BUT HOW SHOULD WE PROCEED?
THIS TIME WE'LL SPLIT UP AND SEARCH IN DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS. SINCE THERE'S ONLY ONE LEFT WE DON'T HAVE TO FEAR A BIG ATTACK.

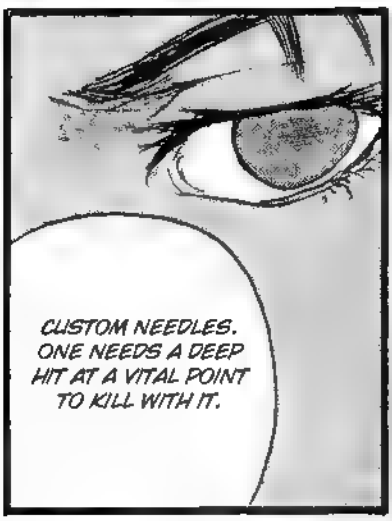
IF ONE KEEPS HIS EYES ON THIS HEIGHT, HE WILL FIND THEM PROBABLY.
...IT'S ALWAYS THE SAME MECHANISM. STRINGS STRAINED IN 4 TO 5 SUN HIGH.

Note 1 Sun is 3cm

I'M EX-HAUSTED, NO WONDER..!
Huff...
AH!

.....
I'M SORRY!




CUSTOM NEEDLES. ONE NEEDS A DEEP HIT AT A VITAL POINT TO KILL WITH IT.

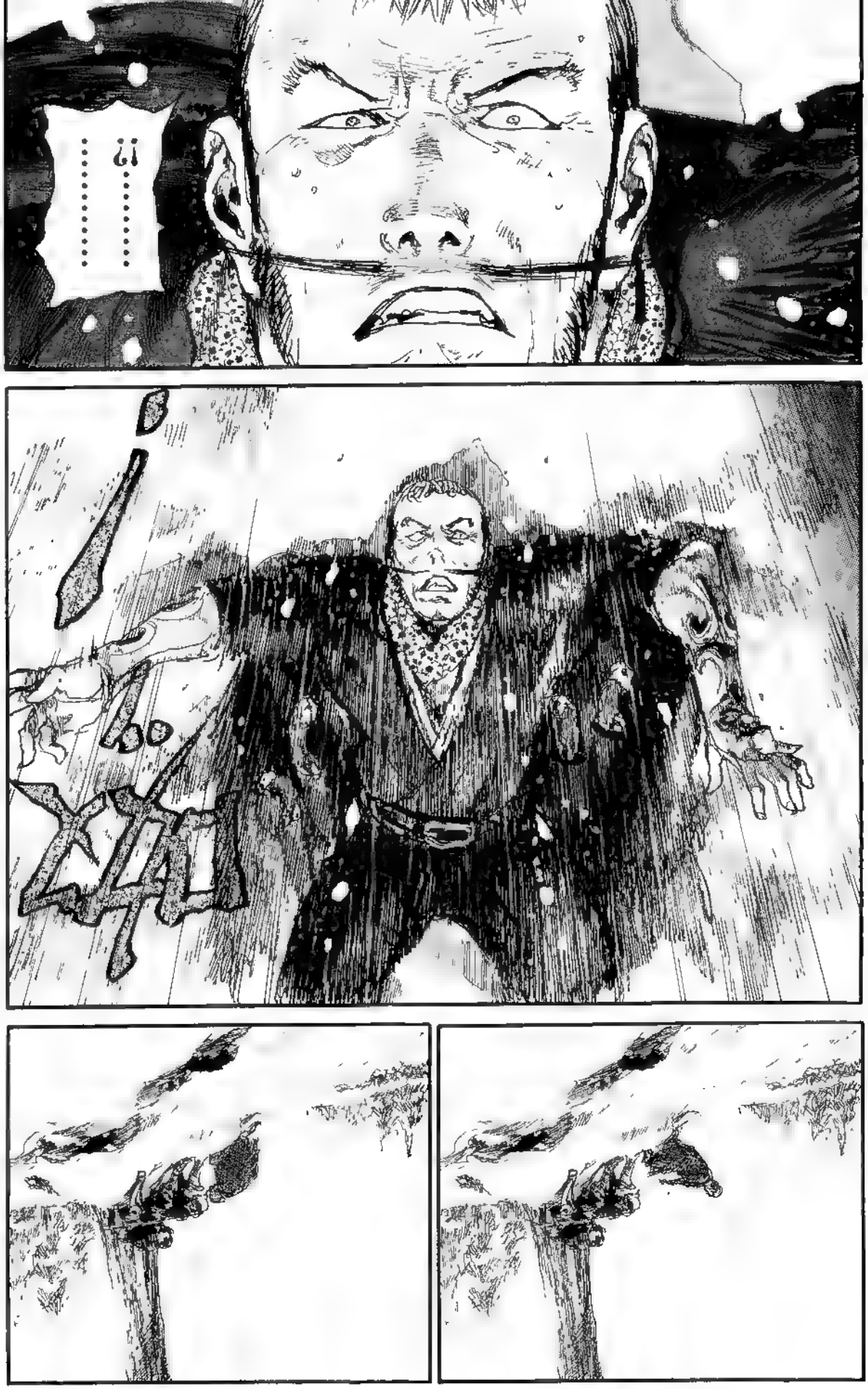
NO POISON...

I CAN WIN AGAINST THIS.

ふ、はあ――‥
I HAVE FOUND THEM!
BUT THEY ARE DEAD...

...INJURIES OUTSIDE.
THEY ARE ONLY TIED UP.
NO...
WERE THEY ATTACKED WITH POISON..? BUT HOW..?
I DON'T SEE ANY STAINS ON THEIR CLOTHES. THEY NEITHER HAVE THROWN UP NOR RESISTED...

WHAT IS THAT?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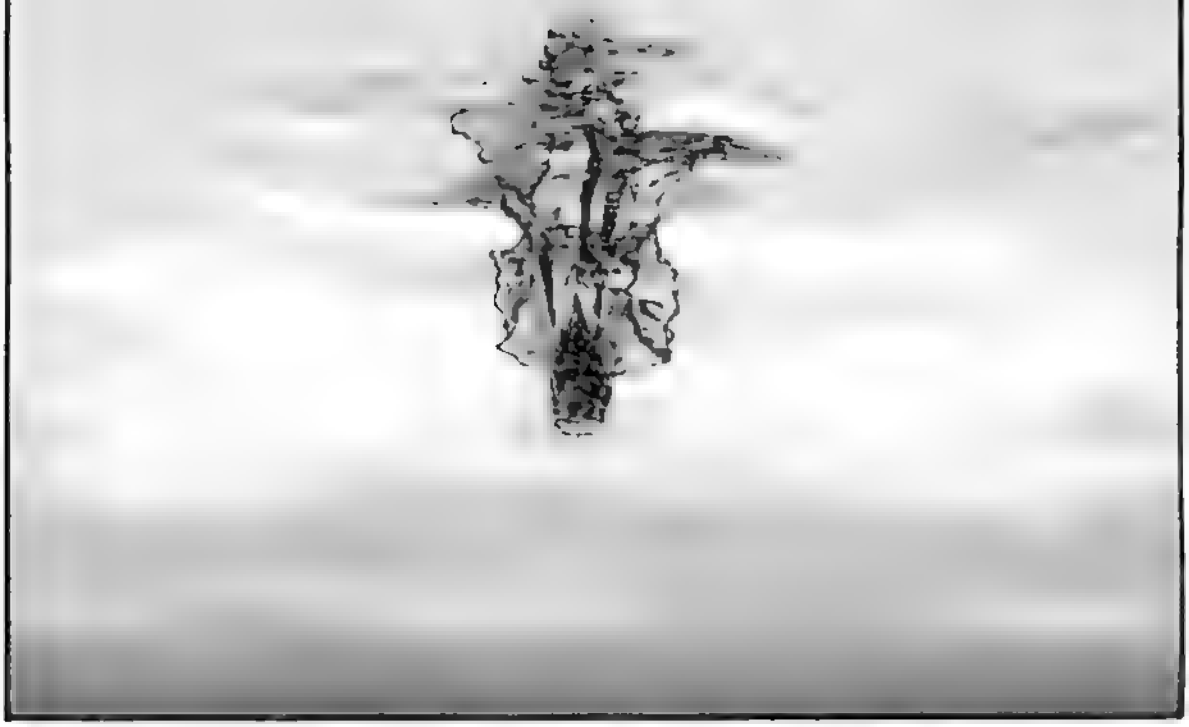
UAAAH..?!
UNGH!
ゴロ..



HUFF
HUFF
HUFF

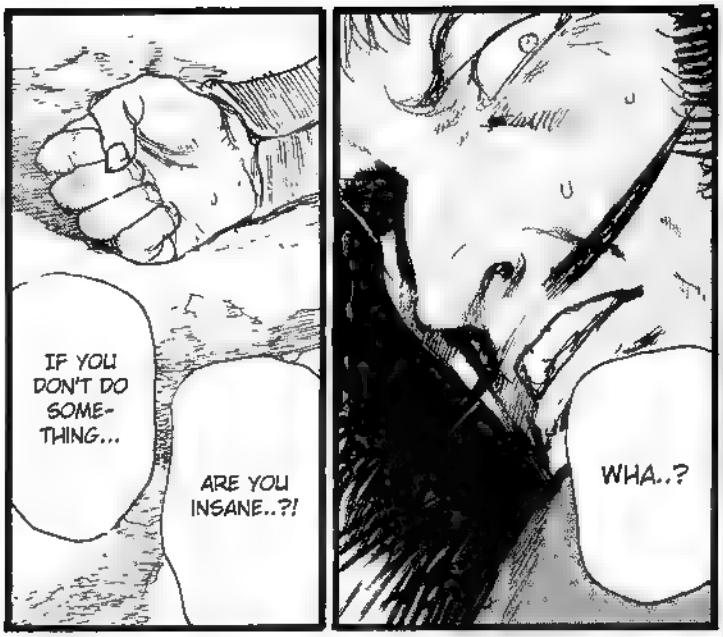
HAA...
HAA.
Chapter 172 End

❖Chapter 173:❖
Pots
-Part 3-

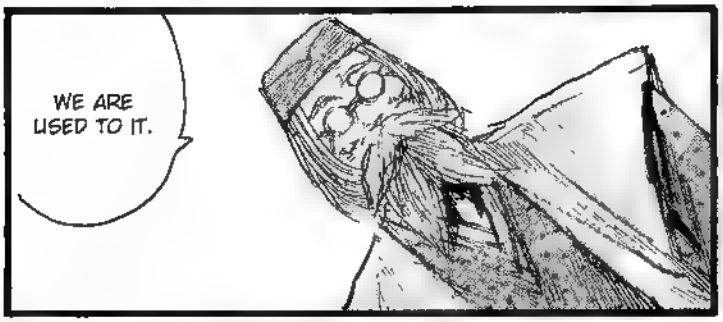
...FOR BREATHING IN!
THANK YOU...
JUST LIKE YOUR PISTOLS. THEY KEPT YOU TARDY.
YOU REALLY ANNOYED ME.

O-OLD MAN...
WHAT IS... IN THE... POT..?!
WELL, WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?
SEA... SEA-SHELLS ?
CORRECT.
THE CLUE IS TO POUR NITRIC ACID OVER THEM.
WITH THAT, HUGE AMOUNTS OF...
...CARBON DIOXIDE ARE SET FREE.
YOU'VE PROBABLY NEVER HEARD OF IT...
HE HE HE...
.....

OF COURSE IT DOESN'T BOTHER US IN SUCH A LOW CONCENTRATION.
...IS EVEN IN THE AIR WE BREATH EVERY DAY, THOUGH IN SMALL AMOUNTS.
BUT THIS SO CALLED CARBON DIOXIDE...
WE HAVE...
...PUT OUT FORTY POTS LIKE THAT HERE IN THE WHOLE FOREST.
THERE!
WHEN YOU OPEN THE LID, THE GAS COMES OUT.
THE AIR WE'RE CURRENTLY BREATHING IS FILLED WITH TWENTY PERCENT CARBON DIOXIDE.
YOU KNOW...
LOOK AT THEM AND YOU WILL UNDERSTAND.
...WHAT HAPPENS?


IF YOU DON'T DO SOME-THING...
ARE YOU INSANE..?!
WHA..?

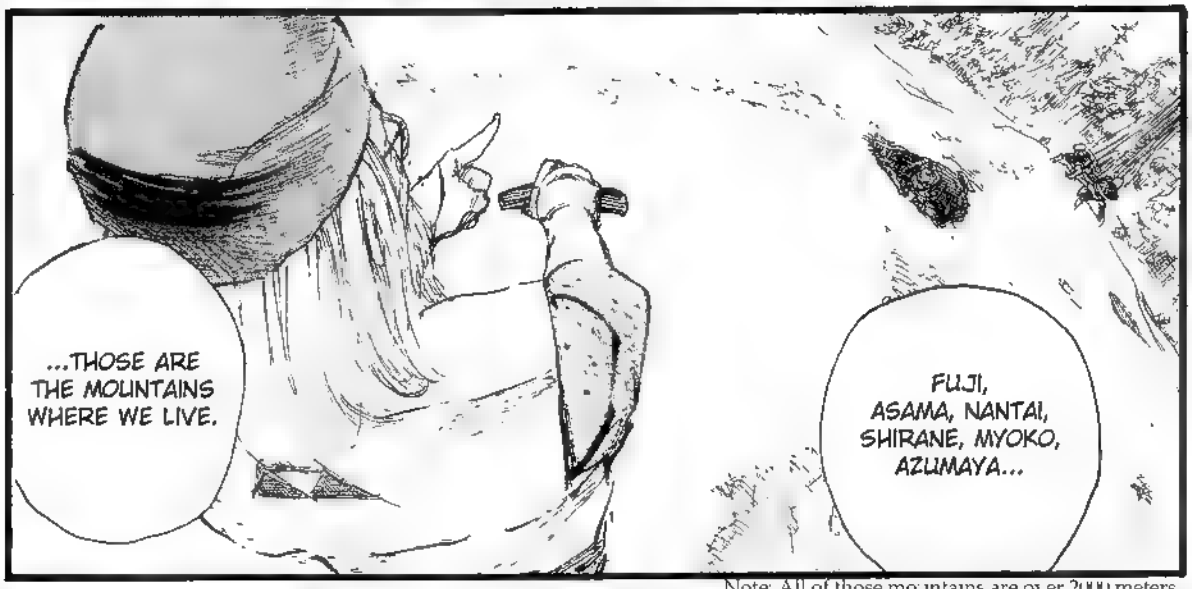
HO HO HO HO...
...THEN YOU'LL BE AFFECTED AS WELL...


WE ARE USED TO IT.

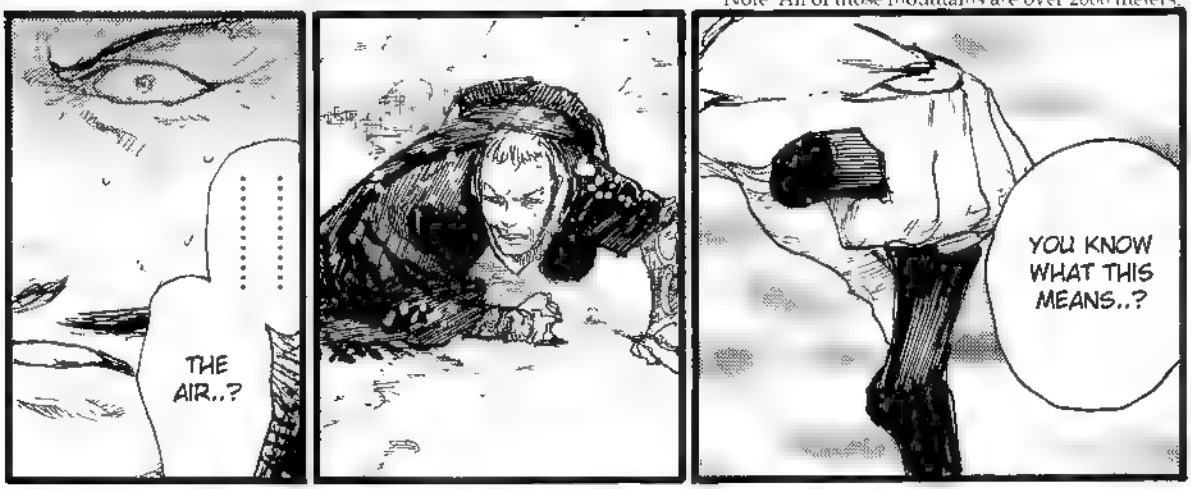
USED TO IT?!

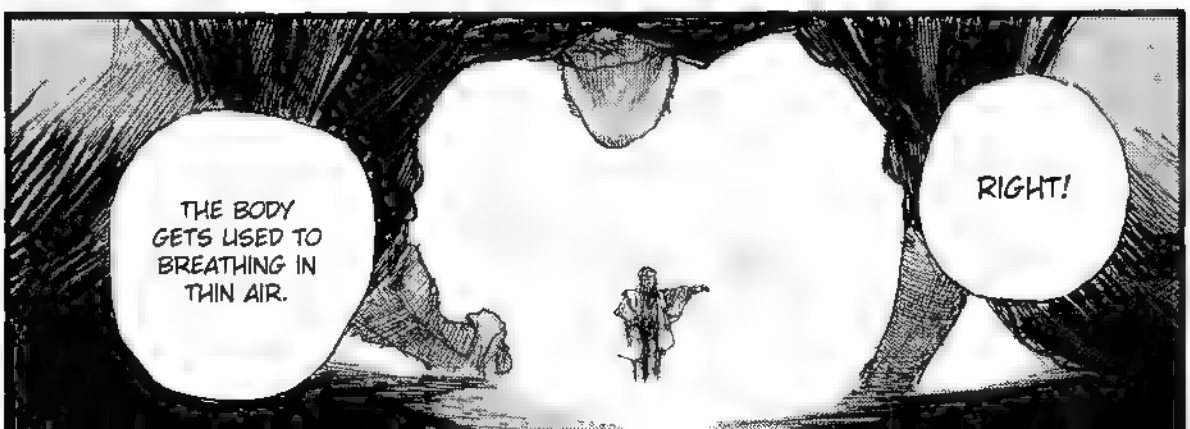
AFTER SOME TIME YOU GET HEADACHES, TINNITUS, DIZZINESS AND SICKNESS...
AFTER A WHILE YOU CAN'T BREATH ANYMORE AND DIE.

THE PEOPLE FROM THE HAMLET LIVE ONE-THIRD OF THE YEAR IN THEIR VILLAGE...
...AND THE OTHER TWO-THIRDS OF THE YEAR IN THE MOUNTAINS.
THEY ARE MOUNTAIN DWELLERS.
JUST LIKE ME



Note: All of those mountains are over 2000 meters.





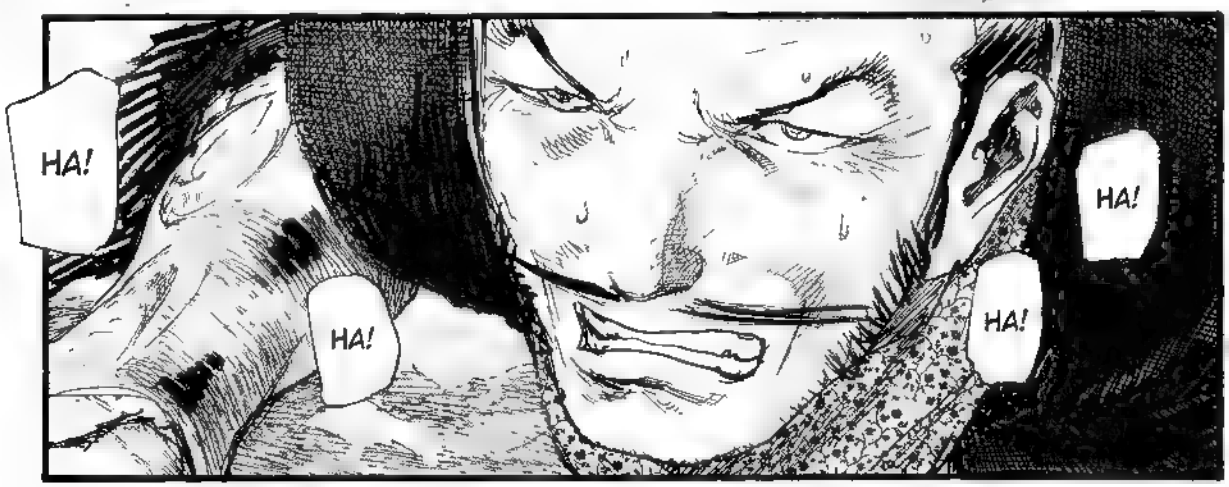
...I ONLY BREATHE ONE-THIRD OF THE AIR AN AVERAGE HUMAN DOES.
HERE IN THIS FOREST...
THE BREATH-ING..?
HA...
HA...
WELL, WELL...
YOU SHOULD REDUCE YOUR BREATHING TOO.
COUGH..! COUGH..!
I SEE...
AH...
OH MY! YOU ARE SMARTER THAN I THOUGHT!
...THE ARCHERS...
THAT'S WHY...

OUR GOAL IS TO MOVE AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE...
...AND KEEP YOU MOVING.
THAT'S WHY WE LURED YOU DEEP INTO THE WOODS.
IF YOU MOVE, YOU RAISE YOUR BREATHING.
THEREBY YOU BREATHE IN EVEN MORE CARBON DIOXIDE.
...IS TO NOT MOVE.
THE SECRET OF OUR "HUNT"...
THEY SHOULD PUT YOU UNDER CONSTANT STRESS.
...BUT THEIR PURPOSE IS TO PETRIFY YOU.
THE BOOBY TRAPS SERVE THE SAME PURPOSE. IF THEY KILL YOU THEN IT'S ALRIGHT WITH US...
WELL?
DO YOU GET IT NOW WHY YOU WERE ANNOYING US?
AND THE STRESS FORCES YOU TO BREATHE MORE AS WELL.

AND ALSO WITH A BETTER ACCURACY THAN MY YOUNG ARCHERS.
...YOU COULD ATTACK FROM A GREAT DISTANCE WITHOUT MOVING MUCH.
EVEN THOUGH YOU WERE NO MOUNTAIN DWELLER...
AT THE END YOU BECAME CARELESS AND BELIEVED WHAT YOUR FEMALE COMPANION SAID...
...THAT THERE WAS ONLY ONE KIND OF TRAP.
OR YOU WERE...
AND YOU ARE CAREFUL.
HO HO HO...
UNNGH...
IF YOU WEREN'T SO CURIOUS ABOUT THE POT...
...THEN I WOULDN'T STAND LIKE THIS BEFORE YOU.

I'M JUST A HEALER AND ONLY CARRY AROUND WHAT'S IN MY MEDICINE BOX.
BUT IF I CAN ASSIGN A TIME AND PLACE...
YOU HAVE TO KNOW...
I'M NOT SUCH AN EXPERIENCED SWORDFIGHTER LIKE THE OTHERS OF ITTO-RYU, AND I'M NOT VERY STRONG EITHER.
...THEN I'M ASSURED I COULD KILL ALL OF ROKKI-DAN ALONE!
THEY ARE NOT POISONED
THESE ARE ACU-PUNCTURE NEEDLES.

I WILL SHOW YOU A PRESSURE POINT WHICH WILL GIVE YOU A PAINLESS DEATH.


HA!
HA!
HA!
HA!

WE'LL SEE...
YOU CAN'T AIM IN YOUR CONDITION.
LET IT BE!

HAH!
HAH!
HAH!
GWAH! FUCKING SHIT!!
UNNGH..!
WOULD YOU LOOK AT THAT..!
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE..!
HA!
HA!
HA!
HA!

BUT...
...YOU MISJUDGED.
YOU ARE NEITHER NARCOTIZED NOR NUMBED.
TO SHOOT YOUR OWN LEG TO GAIN BACK CONSCIOUS-NESS...
YOU PAY A HIGH PRIZE BUT IT'S ONLY A DROP IN THE BUCKET.
SHUT UP!!
JUST SHUT UP YOU OLD FART!!
...AND PULL THE TRIGGER...
I ONLY NEED A FEW SECONDS, NOTHING MORE.
I HAVE TO AIM AT YOUR HEART...

HIS COURAGE IS OUTSTANDING...
SO THIS IS ROKKI-DAN...
GO TO HELL!!

...SO I'M PROTECTED AT CERTAIN AREAS.
...TO HIDE MY NEEDLES IN A SPECIAL PLACE...
I ALWAYS MAKE SURE...
UNGH...
...MY HEART IN HIS CONDITION..! ASTOUNDING!
TO BE ABLE TO HIT...

...THIS ACCURACY WAS YOUR FAILURE.
EVEN SO...

HUFF!
HAA!
HAA!
SAN JI'S DEAD!

IT CAN'T BE!
BY A SINGLE OLD MAN..!?
I HAVE TO WIN...
I HAVE TO DEFEAT HIM..!
UH, MY HEAD...
NEEDLES ...
THINK, RYO!
THINK ABOUT IT!
IF HE THROWS THEN I'M DONE FOR...
BUT WITH REPEATED ATTACKS...
I DON'T HAVE SOMETHING TO COUNTER.
I COULD PROTECT VITAL POINTS.
IF HE THROWS WITH NEEDLES...
...THEN I WON'T BE ABLE TO JUST DODGE THEM.

AAAAH...
I HAVE TO BECOME AWAKE SOMEHOW!
DON'T LOSE CONSCIOUS-NESS..! NO!
BUT THEN...
...WHAT SHOULD I DO?
I HAVE TO DO SOMETHING! I CAN'T WAIT LIKE AN IDIOT FOR DEATH!
ONE MOMENT OF CLARITY WILL DECIDE...
I HAVE TO KILL THE OLD ONE WITHIN A SECOND!
...OVER VICTORY OR DEFEAT.
LIKE A FORGOTTEN JIZO STATUE...
ULULH, IT'S SO COLD!
MY HEAD HURTS LIKE HELL...

...WILL BE AWAKE FOR JUST ONE MOMENT LIKE BAN...
IT'S IMPOSS'BLE... I CAN'T DO IT...
EVEN IF I...

YEAH, RIGHT...
BAN HAD THE GUTS TO SHOOT HIS OWN LEG.
I'LL HAVE TO...
IF I DO...
...STAB IT IN MY LEG...
STOP, WAIT! STUPID GIRL!
DON'T ACT HASTY..!

BAN WAS A TOTALLY DIFFERENT FIGHTER THAN ME.
IN THE WORST CASE...
...HE WOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO KEEP ON WITHOUT HIS LEGS.
IF I STAB MYSELF...
.....
...TO STRIKE DOWN SOMEONE WITH A SWORD.
BUT AS A FEMALE...
...I'LL NEED MY WHOLE BODY...
FOR EXAMPLE, THE EAR...
...THAT WON'T HINDER MY MOVEMENTS.
...THEN ONLY AT A POINT...
I COULD STAY AWAKE LIKE THAT, BUT...
HOW DUMB, THAT WON'T WORK..!

I CAN'T STAB MYSELF WHERE THE ENEMY CAN SEE IT!
...EVERY-ONE COULD SEE IT!
THE NEEDLE HAS TO GO THERE...
SOME-WHERE THE ENEMY CAN'T SEE...
...FROM MOVING...
...AND WON'T HINDER ME...
AS SOON AS I'M AWAKE I HAVE TO ACT...
NEEDLE..? WHAT NEEDLE..?
DARN, MY HEAD..!
PLEASE, STAY AWAKE...
I'LL HAVE TO GET HIM WITHIN RANGE OF MY SWORD OR I FAIL...
I'M NOT ABLE TO MOVE ANYMORE NOW.
...ME YET..!
DON'T LEAVE...

IT'S STILL TOO EARLY..
THE POTS HAVE BEEN OPEN FOR AN HOUR NOW...

IT BECAME TROUBLESOME FOR ME...
IT'S NOT NICE GETTING OLD.
OR IS THE GIRL ALREADY DEAD..?
I HAVE TO END THIS QUICK.
I HAVE TO FIND HER...
!

Chapter 173 | End

❖Chapter 174:❖

Pots

-Part 4-

YOU WILL SUFFER A CRUEL DEATH FOR THIS!
HEY, WILD ONE!

YOU KILLED THREE OF MY PEOPLE!
IT WAS MY MISTAKE ALONE.
NO...
I WILL MAKE YOU...
...AGAINST SWORD-FIGHTERS WHO CAN CHOOSE ANY KIND OF MELEE WEAPON.
WE ONLY HAVE OUR BODIES AND MINDS TO USE...
THESE ARE THE WEAPONS OF THE POOR WHO HAVE NO OTHER METHODS...

NO...
WE MADE THE MISTAKES.
A SWORD-FIGHTER OF YOUR GRADE WOULD HAVE BEEN EASILY DEFEATED BY US...
WHO WOULD EXPECT A WILD BITCH THAT IS BLINDLY STORMING INTO TRAPS...
AAH, IT MAKES ME ANGRY!
SOMEONE LIKE YOU...
...AND A PISTOL SNIPER WITH FANTASTIC ABILITIES SUPPORTING SUCH A CRAZY ONE..?
...TO SEND KAGIMURA HABAKI A MESSAGE.
THEN YOU WILL SERVE US...

IT DEPENDS ON GIVING HIM DOUBTS, HE SHOULD THINK THAT YOU'RE STILL ALIVE...
PEEL OFF THE SKIN FROM YOUR FACE?
SHOULD I CUT OFF YOUR HANDS? OR YOUR ARM?
OF COURSE THOSE ARE NOT REALLY ITTO-RYU METHODS...
I WILL PUT THIS MESSAGE ON HIS PATH.
EVEN IF HE STARTS HUNTING ME THEN, THE WARNING SHOULD BE A SHOCK FOR HIM.
THERE'S NO REACTION..?
IN SUCH AN EMERGENCY SITUATION, AND IN THE ABSENCE OF OUR LEADER, I HAVE NO CHOICE...

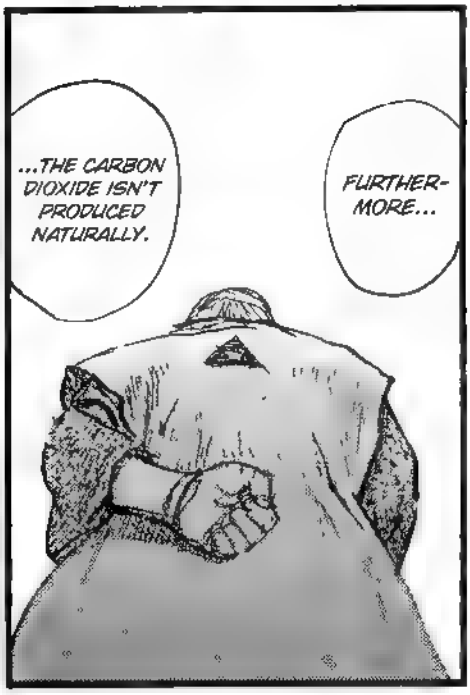
...SHE'S SITTING AT A SPOT WHERE THE GAS IS CONCEN-TRATING.
FURTHER-MORE...
SHE DID RUN MORE THAN ANYONE ELSE.
NO WONDER...
SO UNCON-SCIOUSNESS SHOULD BE NORMAL AND HER BREATHING AGGRIEVED.
BUT THERE ARE LOTS OF TOPPLED TREES, ROOTS AND ROCKS THAT FORM DIPS.
...EVENLY SLOPED...
THE FOREST SEEMS...
...AND ACCUMULATE IN DELLS.
...IT' LL SINK DOWN THE MOUNTAIN...
CARBON DIOXIDE IS HEAVIER THAN AIR. IF IT'S RE-LEASED ON A MOUNTAIN...

IF YOU KNOW WHERE THE CARBON DIOXIDE IS CONCENTRATING...
...IT WILL MAKE A LARGE DIFFERENCE...
...HOW MUCH YOU BREATH IN WHILE RUNNING THROUGH THE WOODS.

NO!
I STILL HAVE A LOT TO TELL!

EVEN WITHOUT ME TAKING ACTIONS SHE WILL DIE SOON...

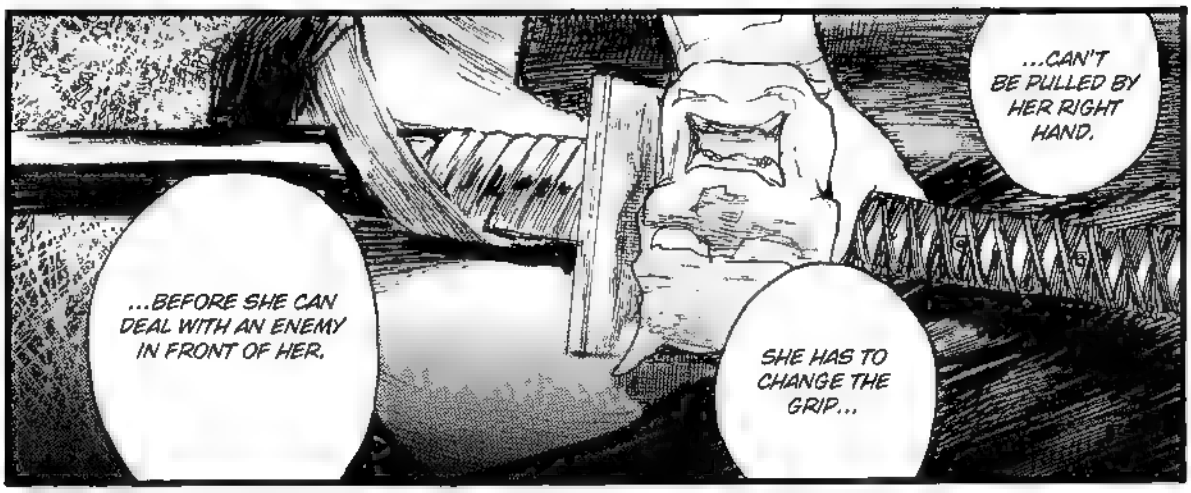
...THE WIND WILL REFRESH THE AIR.
ONCE THE SEASHELLS IN THE POTS ARE GONE...


...THE CARBON DIOXIDE ISN'T PRODUCED NATURALLY.
FURTHER-MORE...

WHO KNOWS IF SHE WILL WAKE UP AGAIN?
I HAVE TO GIVE HER THE FINAL CUT...

SHOULD I LEAVE IT WITH A SINGLE NEEDLE?
IT'S NOT CERTAIN IF SHE WILL START MOVING AGAIN...
SHE DOESN'T SEEM TO FEEL PAIN ANYMORE...

THE SWORD ON HER WAIST...
...IS TOO FAR AWAY TO PICK UP THE SWORD.
THE RIGHT HAND...
...HER LEFT ARM CAN'T MOVE ANYMORE.
AT LEAST...


...BEFORE SHE CAN DEAL WITH AN ENEMY IN FRONT OF HER.
SHE HAS TO CHANGE THE GRIP...
...CAN'T BE PULLED BY HER RIGHT HAND.

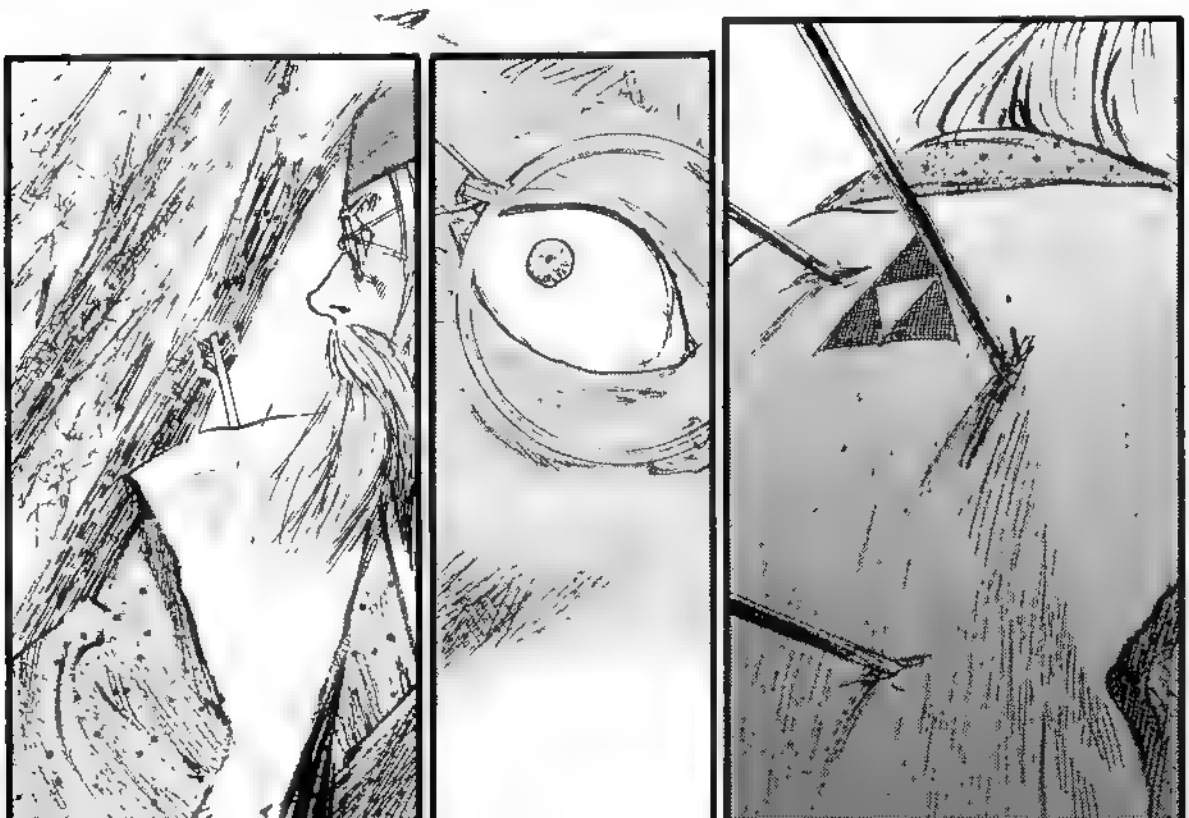
...TO WIELD A SWORD SINGLE HANDED.
SHE DOESN'T HAVE THE STRENGTH ANYMORE...

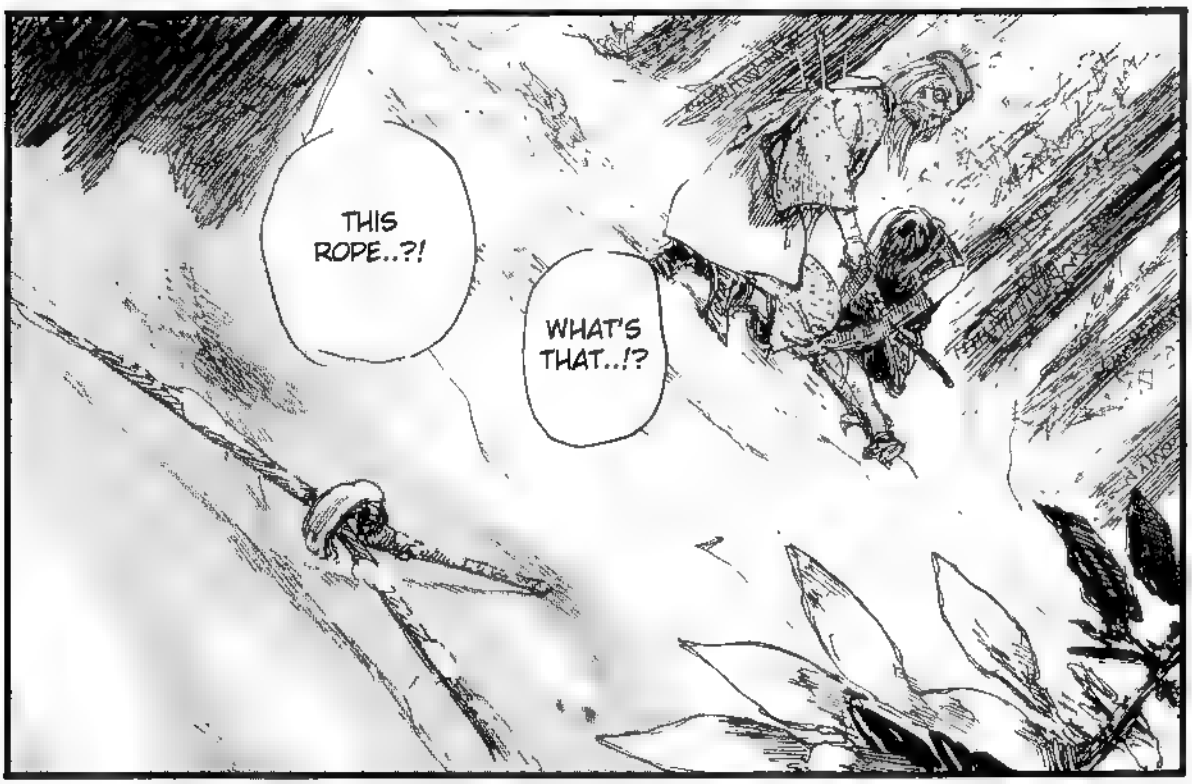
I SHOULD BE ABLE TO DODGE SUCH A MOVEMENT WITHOUT ANY EFFORTS.

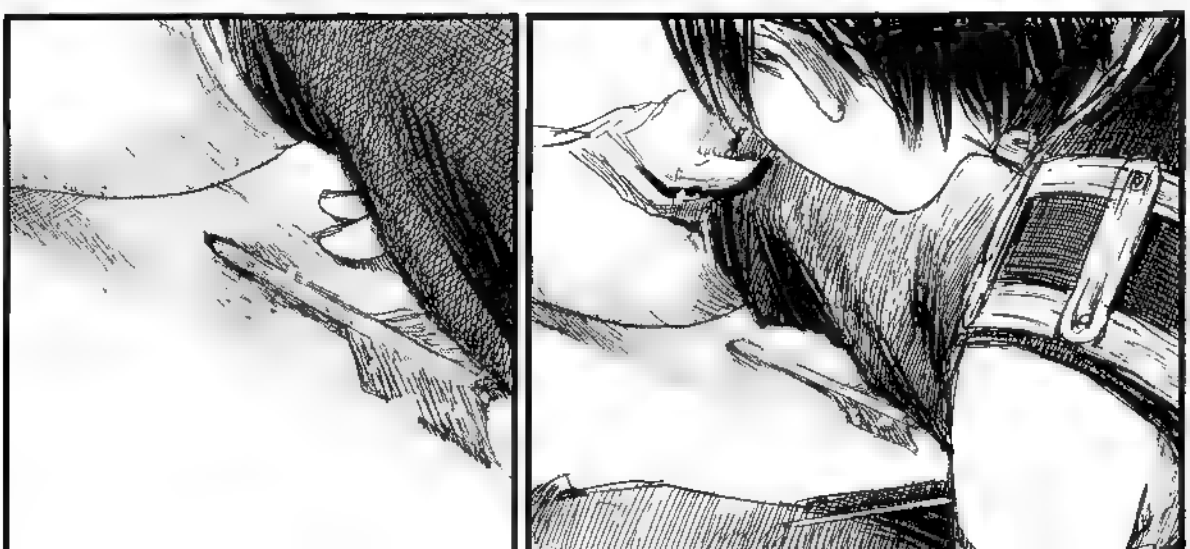
BUT TO BE SURE... YOU NEVER KNOW...

OH MY!
SUCH A YOUNG ONE..!
THERE'S STILL THE LIGHT OF LIFE IN HER EYES...
THESE HANDS...
SHE'S NOT THE DAUGHTER OF A SAMURAI.
HER LIFE MUST HAVE BEEN CONSTANT HARD WORK.
IT WOULD HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO...
BUT WHY ARE GIRLS LIKE THIS CHARGING INTO BATTLE TODAY?
ALTHOUGH...
...IT'S THE SAME WITH THE PEOPLE OF MY VILLAGE.

FIENDS..!
POOR FOOLS...
WHAT KIND OF BATTLES ARE THESE ANYMORE..?
ズ"ズ".
...THAT ARE DRAWN INTO THE BATTLES BETWEEN SAMURAIS.
KILLER AND THE KILLED...
ズズズ"...
...ALL OF THEM ARE JUST POOR DEVILS.

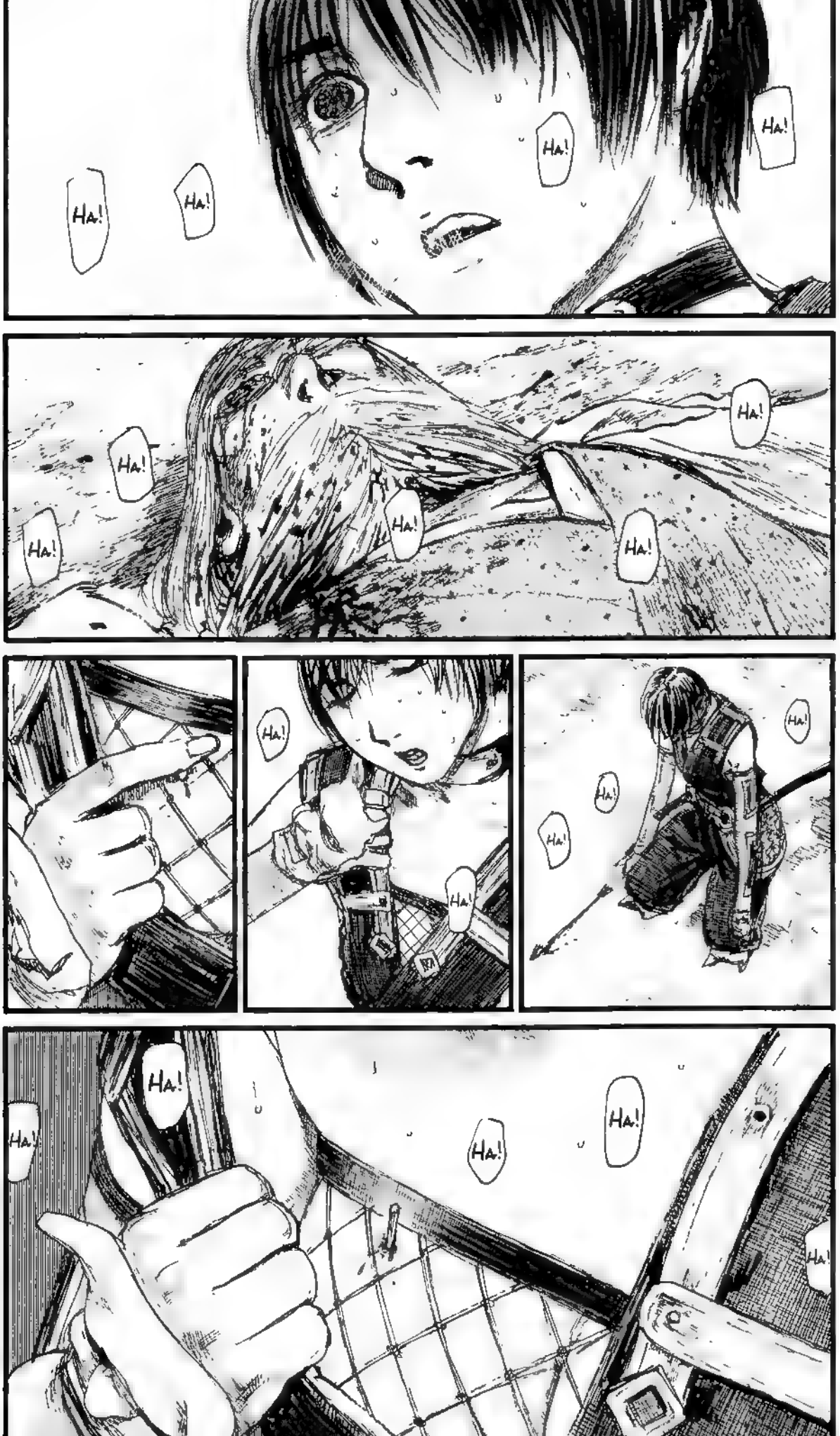



THIS ROPE..?!
WHAT'S THAT..!?



MAYBE YOU KNOW...
...I DON'T HAVE...
...THE POWER TO WIELD A SWORD ANYMORE.
BUT...
...YOUR COMRADES HAVE LEFT ME...
...AN EASIER WEAPON TO ATTACK WITH...

T-THAT YOU...
...CON-SCIOUS..!
...STILL...
...WERE...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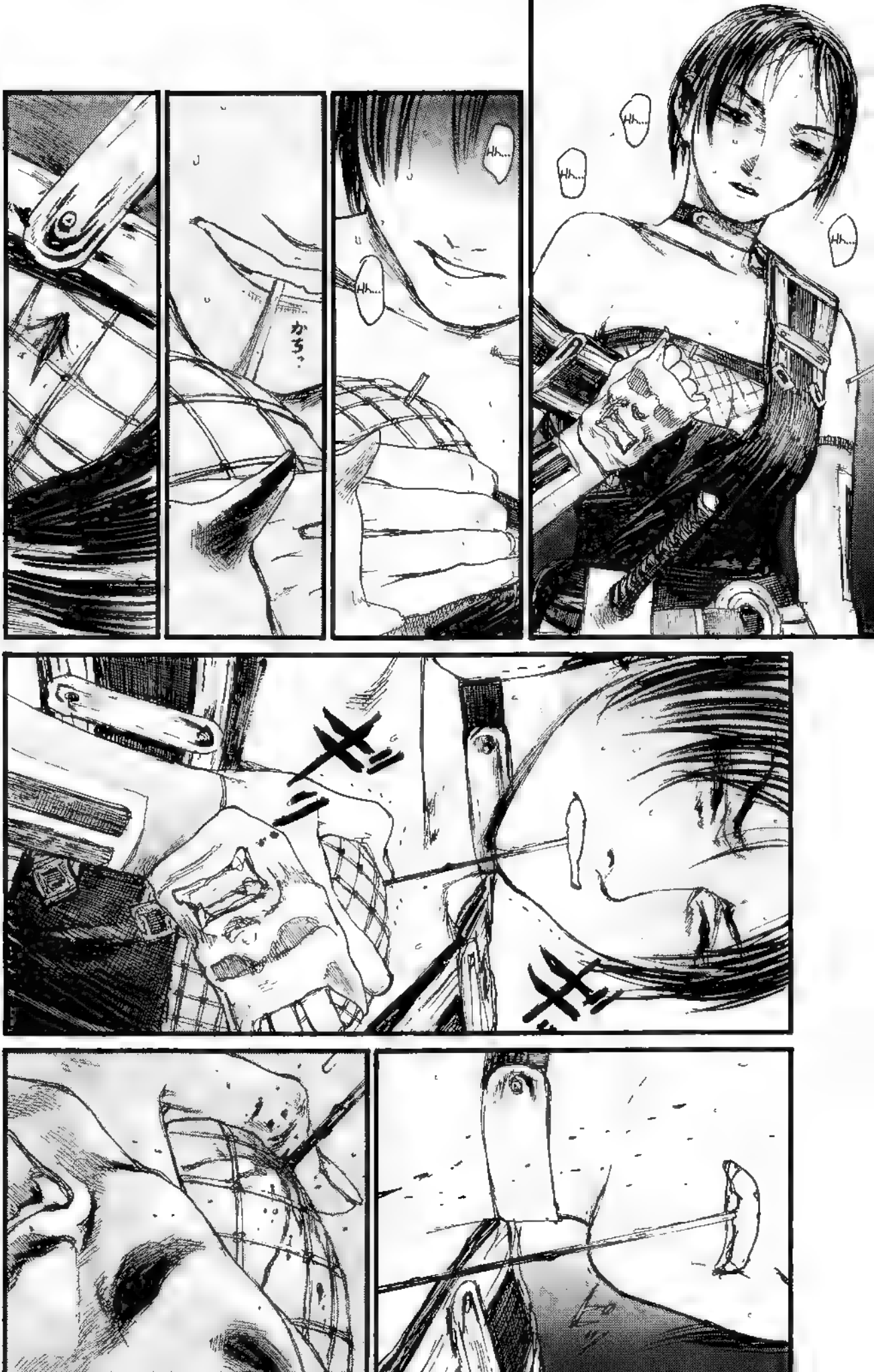
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Hh...
Hh...
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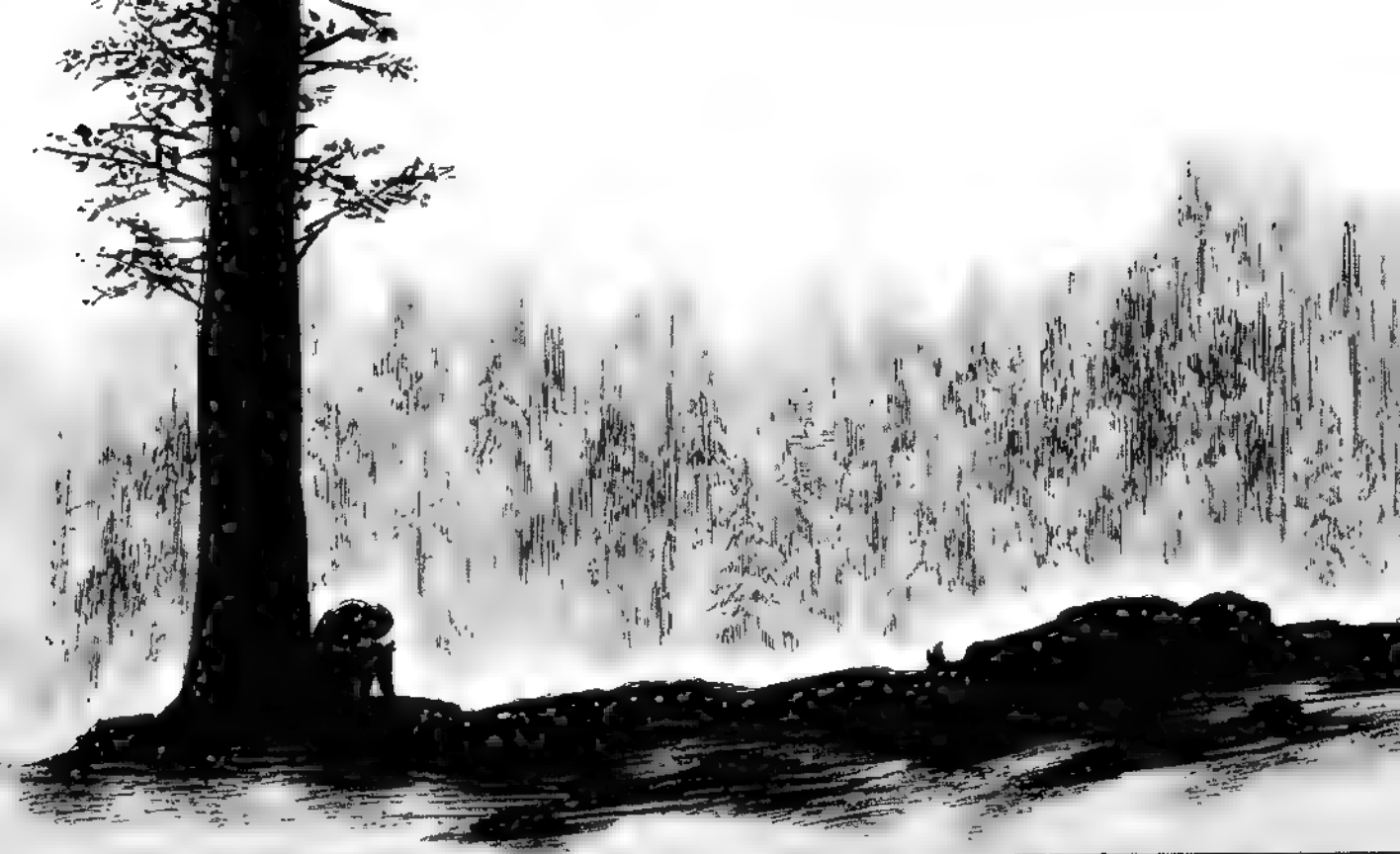
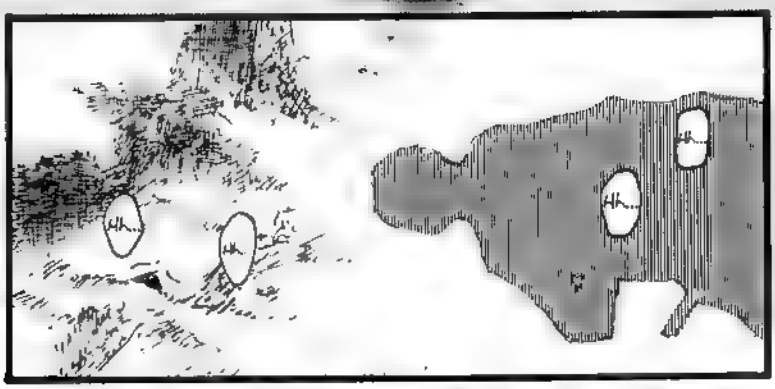
Hh...




Hh...
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Hh...
Hh...

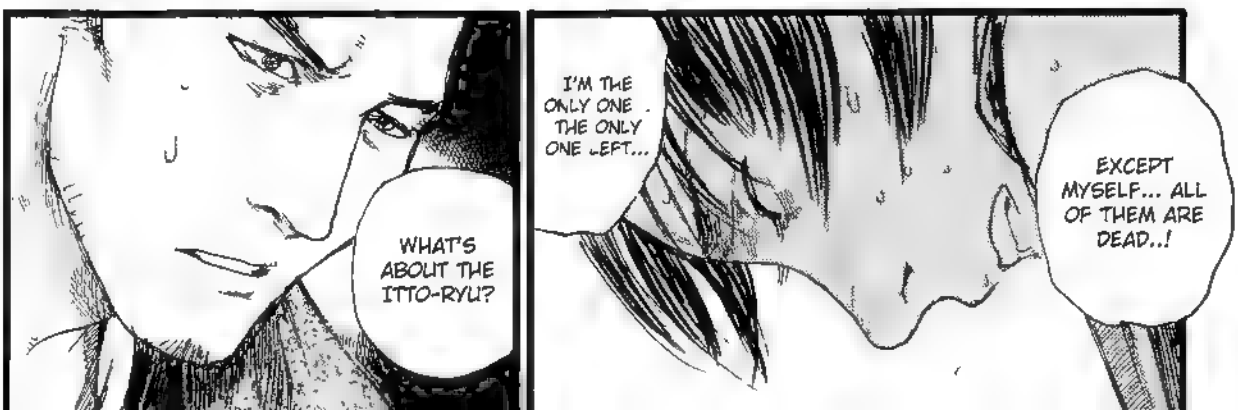
Ha...
Ha...

HNNH...

RYO!

EH, YOU KNOW...
BAN SAID, I SHOULD STAY HERE AND BRING HELP IF YOU DIDN'T COME BACK WITHIN AN HOUR.
!!
I DID THAT...
MITAKE-SAN..?!

BRACE YOURSELF! DID YOU LOSE A LOT OF BLOOD?
Hey, the horse..!
M... MITAKE-SAN..!
EXCUSE ME..! I'M SORRY..!

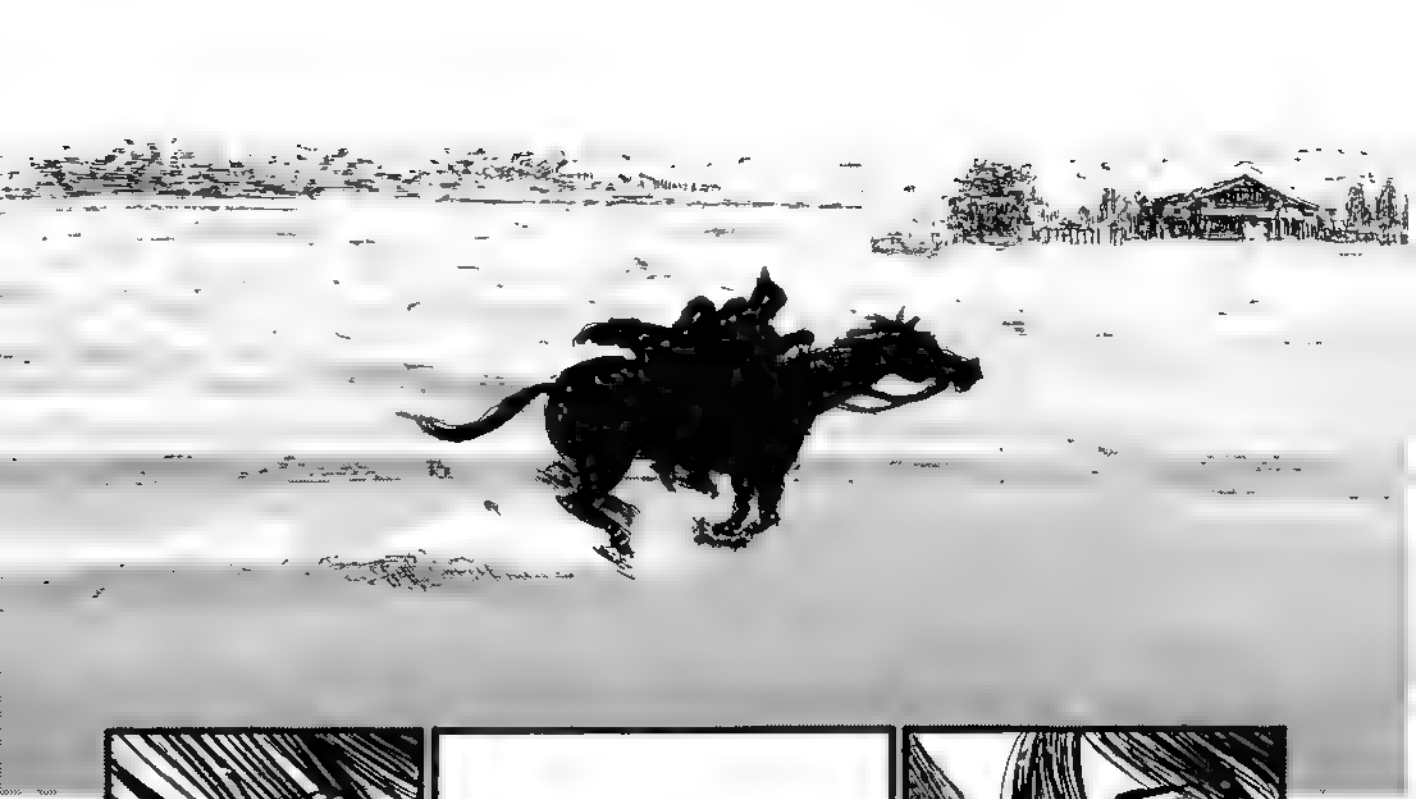

WHAT'S ABOUT THE ITTO-RYU?
I'M THE ONLY ONE . THE ONLY ONE LEFT...
EXCEPT MYSELF... ALL OF THEM ARE DEAD..!

IF ITTO-RYU HAS LOST A FEW PEOPLE AND NOTHING HAPPENED TO YOU THEN IT'S ALRIGHT FOR NOW.
I THINK... WE HAVE KILLED THEM ALL.
HM, UNDER-STOOD...

...OVER THE HEBIGUMI OR BAN-SAN!
AFTER A FAILURE THEIR LIVES WOULD BE FORFEIT ANYWAY.
B-BUT... THE HEBIGUMI... AND BAN-SAN...
RYO, DON'T DISTRESS YOURSELF...

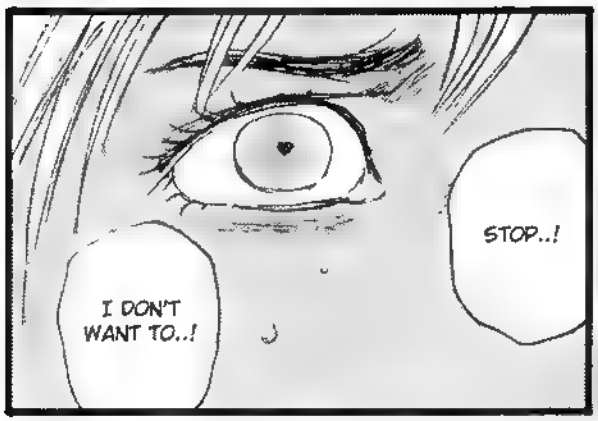
YOU MUST BE EXHAUSTED. I'LL BRING YOU TO MASTER HABAKI ON THIS HORSE.
COME..!

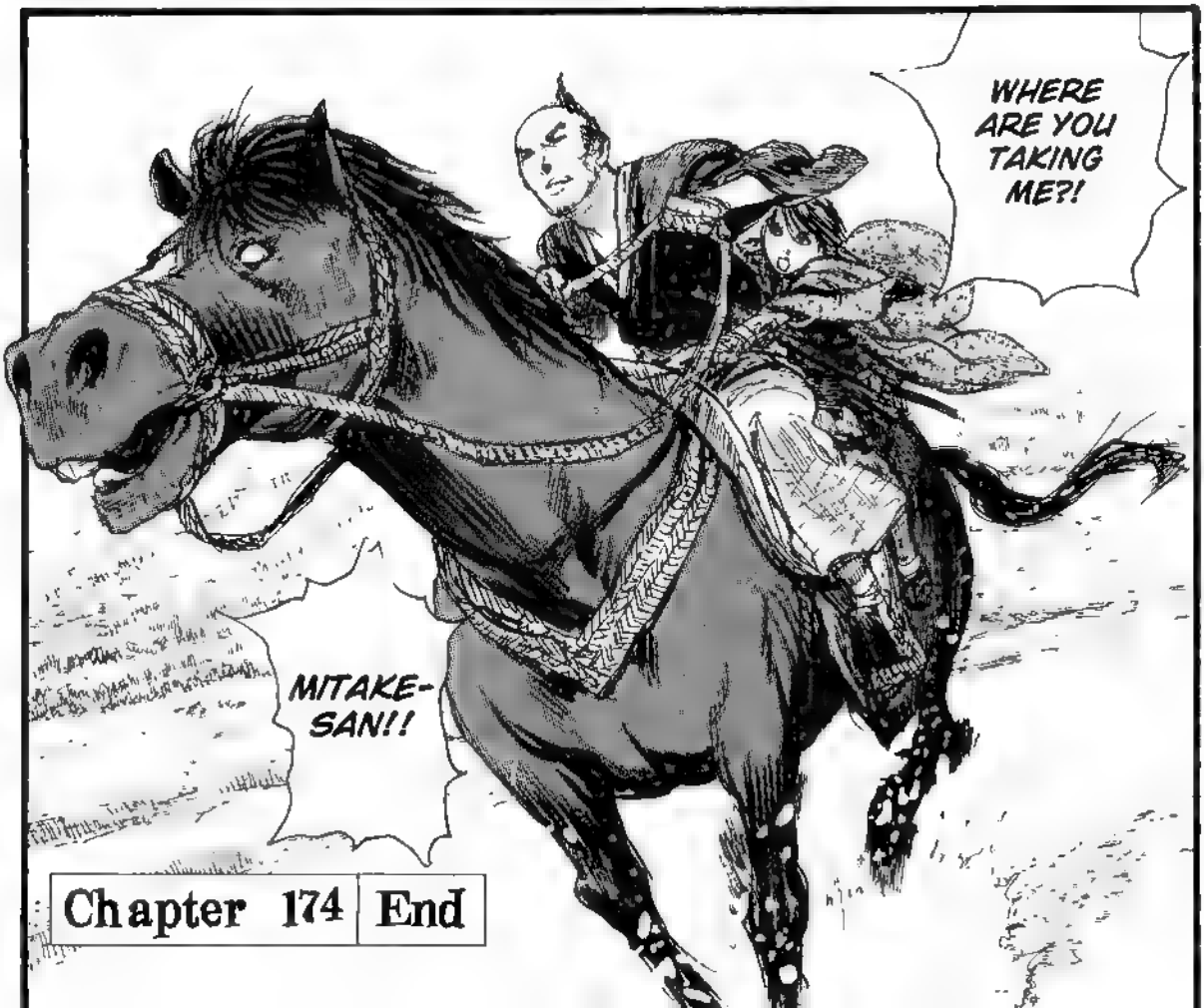
HEEY YAA!!



WE ALREADY PASSED BY THIS HOVEL...

MITAKE-SAN...
THIS IS NOT THE WAY TO HABAKI-SAMA.





Chapter 174 End

Chapter 175:
Exertion of Virility
-Part 1-

MITAKE-SAN!
...GO THERE!
I DON'T WANNA...
PLEASE BRING ME BACK TO HABAKI-SAN!!

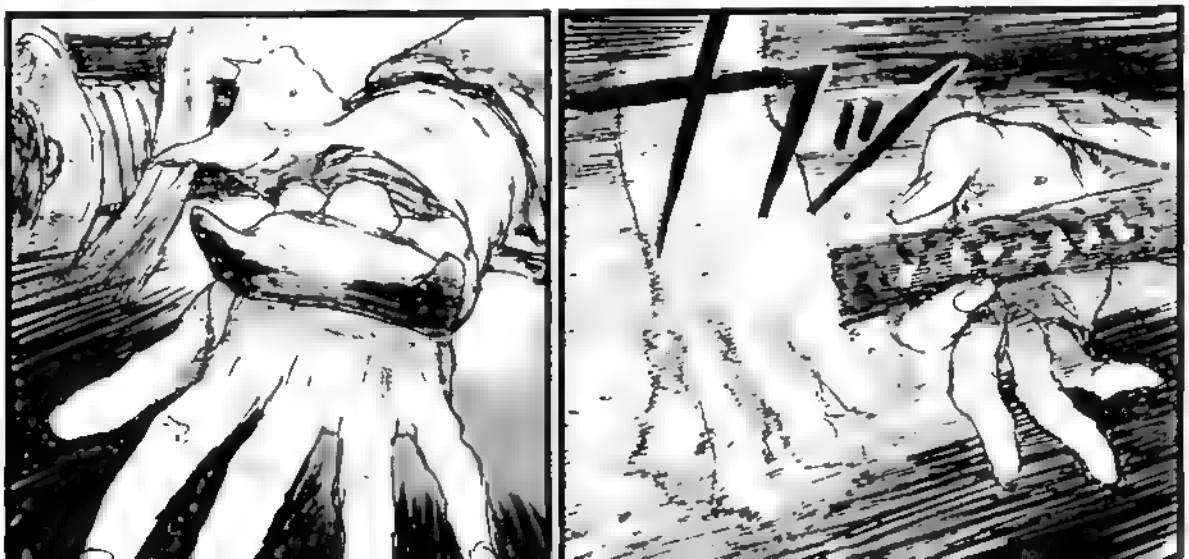
BEFORE WE LEFT EDO...
...HABAKI-SAN SAID TO ME...
...NEITHER YOU NOR ME HAVE TO DIE ON THIS JOURNEY.
IF I HAD THE IMPRESSION...
...THAT YOU WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO CONTINUE FIGHTING...
...I WAS INSTRUCTED TO BRING YOU BACK TO EDO...
...AND PUT YOU UNDER HOUSE ARREST UNTIL THE BATTLE IS OVER.
WHA..?
NO!
MY FATHER WOULD NEVER SAY THAT...
HE'S A RIGOROUS SAMURAI!
HE WOULD NEVER SAY SOMETHING FATUOUS LIKE THAT OUT OF PARENTAL LOVE!!
PLEASE DON'T FOOL ME, MITAKE-SAN!

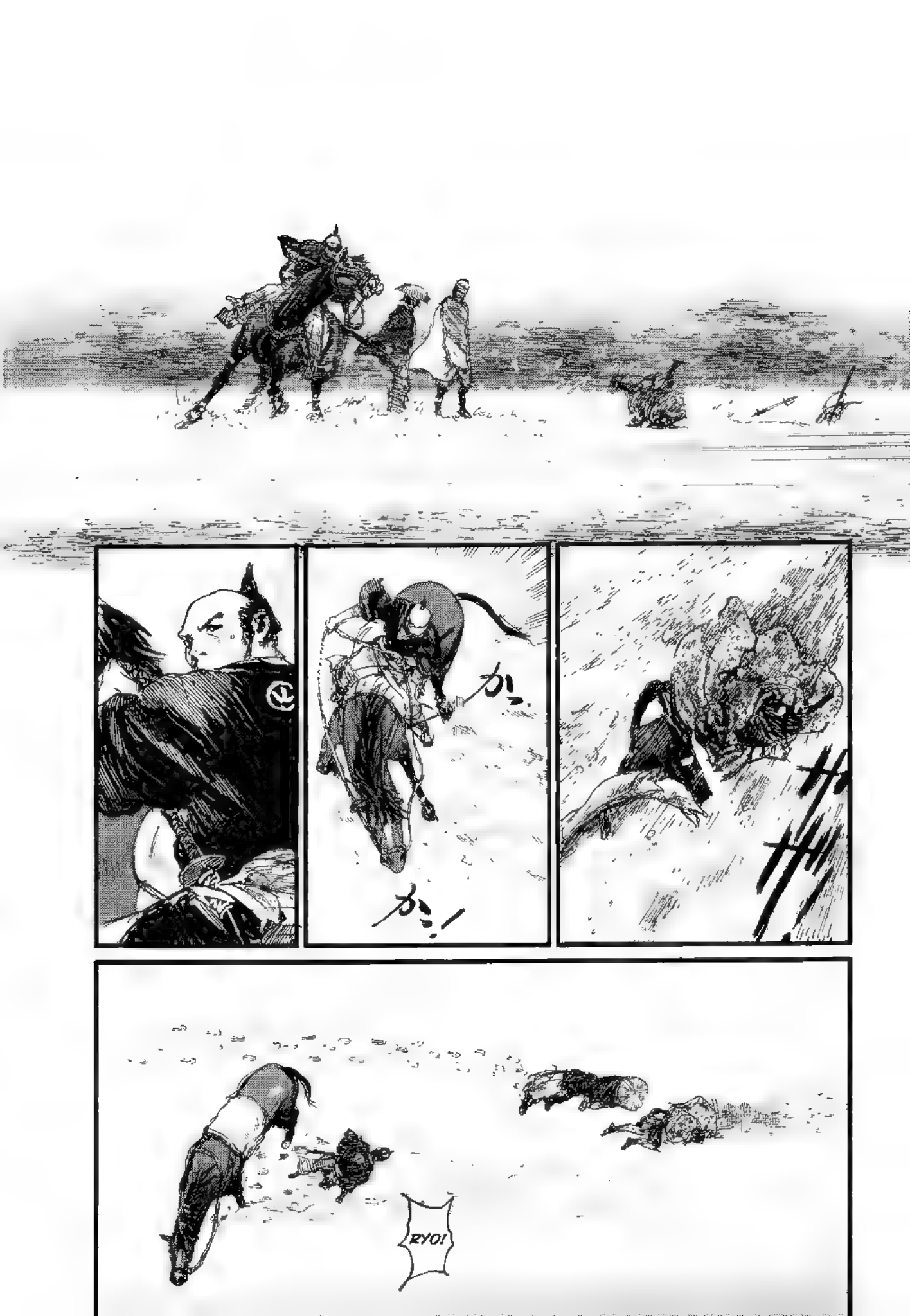
WHO GAVE YOU THE RIGHT?!
"FATUOUS", YOU SAY?!
WHAT MAKES YOU SAY THAT?!
STOP ACTING LIKE A SPOILED BRAT!!
YOU DON'T UNDER-STAND HIS FEELINGS AT ALL!
YOU ADORE HABAKI WITH A KIND OF LOVE THAT GOES BEYOND WHAT SHOULD BE NATURAL BETWEEN A PARENT AND A CHILD!
HIS NAME AND FOR-TUNE...
HABAKI HAS LOST EVERY-THING!
...WIFE AND CHILD..!

HIS LIFE IS FORFEIT, IT DOESN'T MATTER IF HE KILLS ANOTSU OR NOT!
ONLY PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN SENTENCED TO DEATH BY THE SHOGUN GOVERNMENT...
...ARE ALLOWED TO CONNECT THEIR FATE TO HIS!
THAT'S THE WAY OF THE CONDEMNED TO DEATH!
BUT THIS...
...IS NOT YOUR WAY!!
THOSE WHO DIE, AND THOSE WHO LIVE...
WOMEN AND MEN... ALL HAVE A DUTY.
YOU HAVE TO UNDER-STAND THAT!
THE ONLY WOMAN WHO WILL BE ABLE TO CONTINUE HABAKI'S BLOODLINE HAS TO SURVIVE!
BLOOD...
WOMAN ...

PLEASE DON'T LEAVE ME BEHIND..!
WHAT SENSE IS THE EXISTENCE OF THE HABAKI FAMILY...
...WITHOUT YOU, FATHER..?!

DAMN..!




RYO!

!?
MITAKE-SAN..?
KEEP OUT OF THIS!
HEY, YOU TWO!!

THAT'S A GIRL, RIGHT?
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

HYAKURIN...
GIICHI...

MITAKI-SAN, WHAT'S WITH THIS GIRL?
OH DEAR..!
I THINK HER RIGHT SHOULDER IS DISLOCATED.
...OF HABAKI-SAN.
SHE'S THE DAUGHTER...
FOR REAL..?!
.....

SAY...

JUST LET IT RUN...
IT'S TOO COLD OUTSIDE.
MAYBE YOU SHOULD TAKE HER WAIST-CLOTH OFF.

WHAT SHOULD WE DO IF SHE HAS TO PEE?

THAT HABAKI-SAN HAS AN ILLEGITIMATE CHILD. !

TO BE HONEST, IT'S UNBEARABLE FOR ME TO BE THE ONLY ONE MISSING FROM THE FINAL ENCOUNTER...
IF SOMETHING LIKE THAT HAPPENS AGAIN THEN SHE WON'T GET AWAY WITH JUST A DISLOCATED SHOULDER.
TO MAKE IT CLEAR...
OUR HEARTS ARE WITH HABAKI.
TO MOVE HIS DAUGHTER OUT OF THE WAY...
...BEFORE THE FINAL BATTLE... THAT MAKES THE OLD BASTARD NEARLY LIKABLE AGAIN.
GIVE HER SOMETHING TO EAT TWO TIMES A DAY! I'M COUNTING ON YOU.
I'LL RETURN IN THREE DAYS.
IF I... IF NO ONE COME TO PICK HER UP THEN YOU CAN JUST LET HER GO.
WITH YOUR HELP PROBABLY IN TWO DAYS.
YOU THINK IT WILL BE OVER TILL THEN?
THREE DAYS..?

I THANK YOU.
HYAKURIN, GIICHI...
ABOVE ALL, KAGEHISA ANOTSU...
IF HE RETURNS UNHURT THEN YOU ARE THE ONLY ONES WHO COULD STOP HIM...
NEITHER HABAKI-SAN NOR I THINK THAT ROKKI-DAN IS CAPABLE OF DEFEATING THEM.
BUT THE FOUR THAT HAVE AMBUSHED THE PALACE...
THE FRACTION OF ITTO-RYU ON THE MITO-PATH...
...WILL BE DEALT WITH BY US SOMEHOW.

...AND YOU.
HABAKI-SAN HIMSELF...
YOU CAN COUNT ON ME.
UNDER-STOOD.

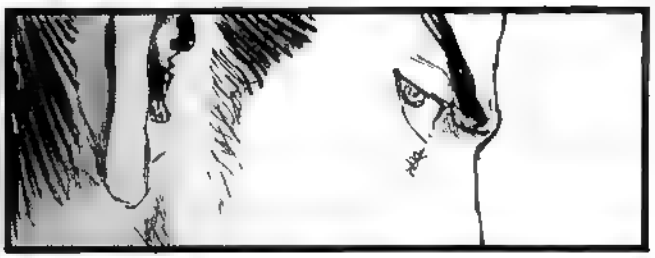
FOUR DEAD..?
WHAT ABOUT THE ONE WHO SURVIVED..?
YES...
SHE WAS EXHAUSTED FROM THE FIGHT AND WAS HANDED OVER...
...TO SIR MITAKE AS ARRANGED. HE RODE AWAY WITH HER.
I SEE.
DO YOU CONDEMN ME?
NO!
I HAVE A SON MYSELF...
I'M NOT ALLOWED TO LOSE THIS BATTLE.
I ONLY NEED THOSE...
THAT'S WHY I HAVE TO FREE MYSELF FROM EVERYTHING THAT MIGHT HANDICAP ME
...WHO ARE ALREADY DEVOTED TO DEATH...
...AND THE ONES HIRED WITH MONEY.
WHAT SOPHISTRY!

YES.
THANK YOU, YOU CAN GO NOW.
REGARDING THE DESCRIPTION THE DEAD ONE MUST BE SOMEONE FROM THE LEADING MEMBERS.
ONE LESS ITTO-RYU ON THE MITO-PATH, STILL TEN LEFT.
I WANTED TO CARRY OUT A DEVASTATING BLOW ON THE GROUP BEFORE THE FOUR FROM EDO WILL MEET UP WITH THEM.
BUT IT'S TOO LATE.
...AND ONE OF THE HANAGUMI.
WE HAVE PAID FOR HIS DEATH WITH THREE OF THE HEBI-GUMI...
...THREE TO FOUR HOURS OF ADVANCING ON FOOT.
...THE ITTO-RYU STILL HAVE...
PROVIDED BY MY HORSE-MAN...

I HAD TO MALTREAT MY MEN
TO SHORTEN THE ADVANCE
WE HAD TO SLEEP OUTSIDE.
BECAUSE WE WOULD ARRIVE TOO LATE AND GET UP TOO EARLY FOR GUESTHOUSES...
ONLY FOUR HOURS OF SLEEP EVERY NIGHT
WHEN WE LEFT EDO IT WAS STILL ONE DAY.
THAT IT ALL LASTED TILL NOW EVEN SURPRISES MYSELF.
WE ONLY HAVE DRY FOOD TO EAT.
...I COULDN'T EXPECT TO WIN. NOTHING WOULD BE GAINED FROM THIS.
BUT AFTER SUCH A MARCH
WITH A FORCED MARCH WE WOULD BE ABLE TO GET THEM IN ONE DAY.
ABOUT A FOUR HOUR ADVANCE

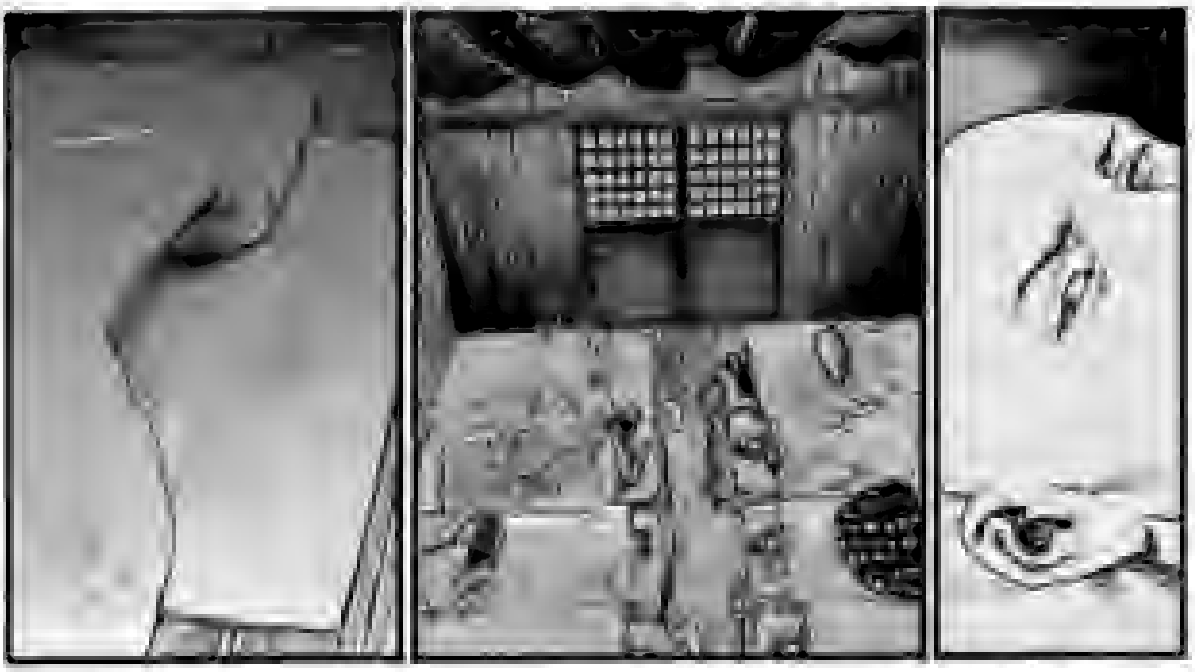
BUT THESE ONE OR TWO HORSES...
TO FOLLOW THEM BY HORSE WOULD SAVE ENERGY.
BUT ON THIS PATH THERE ARE ONLY ONE OR TWO HORSES TO OBTAIN.

WAKE UP ARASHINO!



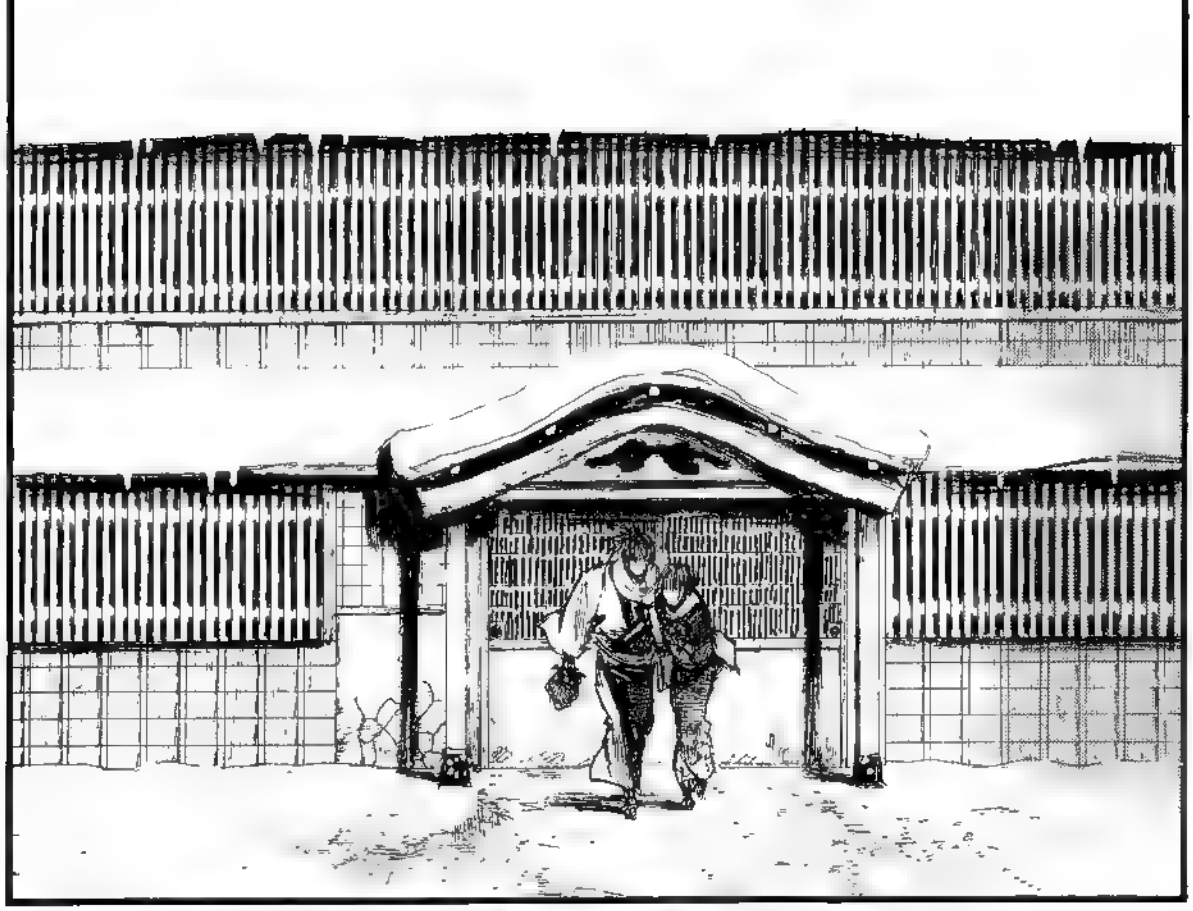
YES?
HEY!

THANKS.
GIVE ME ONE TOO!
WE HAVEN'T DONE THIS SINCE THE DOJO.
I GATHERED US SOME BLANKETS.
IT WOULD MAKE RESISTANCE DIFFICULT IN CASE OF AN ATTACK.
IF WE COULDN'T GET A SHARED ROOM IN A GUESTHOUSE, WE MIGHT HAVE HAD TO SLEEP IN SEPARATE HOSTELS.
FURTHERMORE, OTHERS WOULD BE IMPLICATED.
YEAH, THAT TOO.

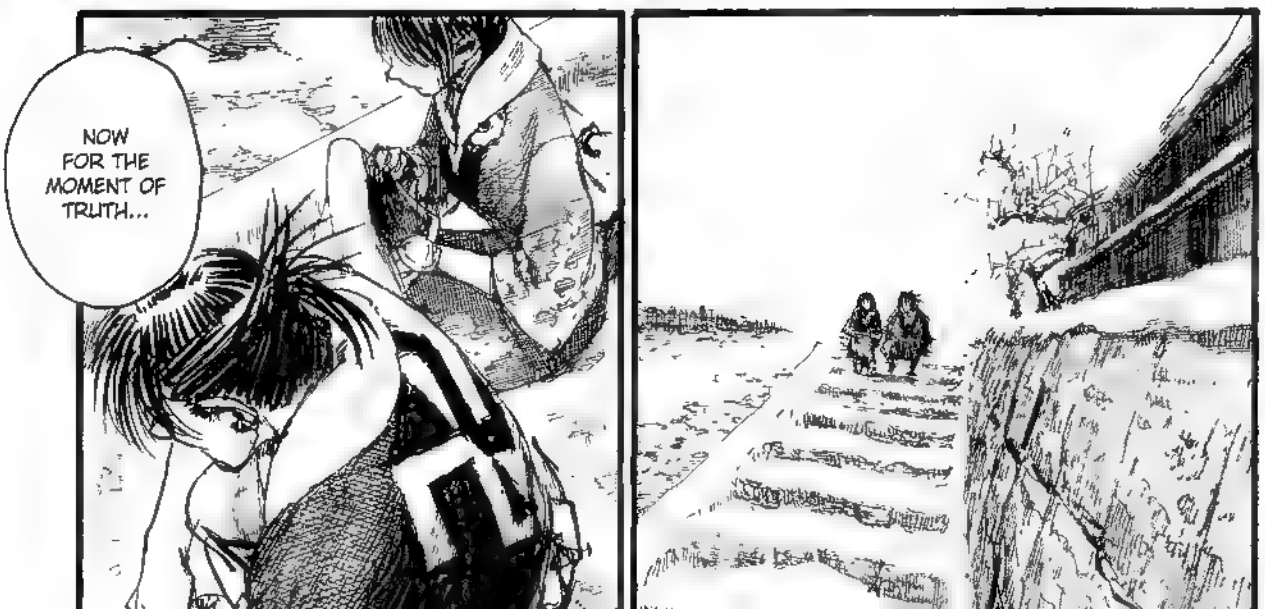


KOJI KASHIN DIDN'T RETURN.
ONLY MEAN...

BAH, IT'S COLD!
SHIT...
THIS COLD IS SHRINKING MY EVERY-THING..!
HM?



YOU'RE OKAY?
YES.

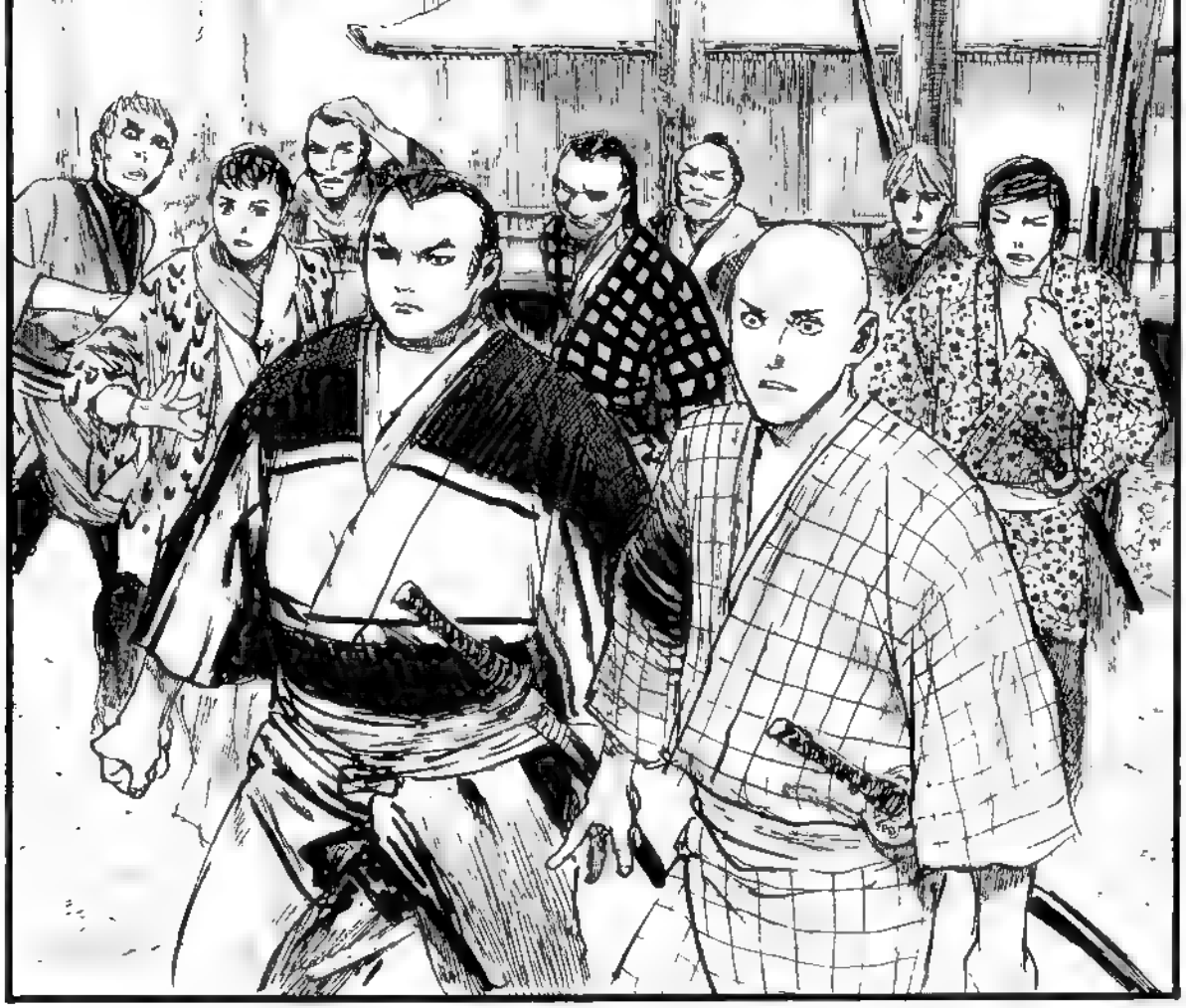

NOW FOR THE MOMENT OF TRUTH...

THIS IS ALL WE HAVE LEFT.
Also half of my gold bugs..
DURING THE BUSINESS WITH SHIRA ALL MY GOLD COINS FELL INTO THE POND.
IF WE DON'T SAVE ON THE FOOD...
...WE WON'T EVEN BE ABLE TO AFFORD A SLEAZY JOINT.
WE CAN FORGET ABOUT A SEDAN.
AND A HORSE... FOR SOME REASON THERE WEREN'T ANYMORE BEHIND TSUCHIURA.
IF IT WEREN'T FOR YOUR FEET...
I TOLD YOU IT'S NO PROBLEM!
IT MIGHT TAKE LONGER TO HEAL ...
...BUT I'M ABLE TO WALK.

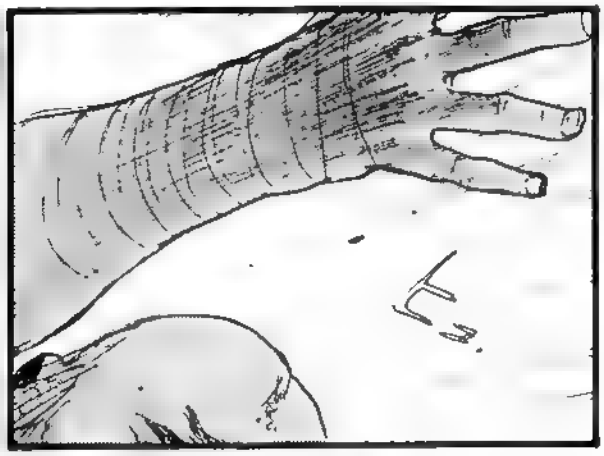
DO YOU KNOW HOW FAR IT IS?!
B-BUT, MANJI..!
C'MON, HOP ON! YOU'RE COLD TOO, RIGHT?
ALSO, WE WOULD LOOK TOTALLY STUPID IF WE CAME TOO LATE AND EVERYTHING WAS OVER AND DONE.
WE DIDN'T DO THIS SINCE KAGA...
YEAH, REALLY?

...THIS MIGHT BE THE LAST TIME WE'RE ABLE TO DO THIS ON THIS JOURNEY.
BE-SIDES...
AM I TOO HEAVY?
HEY!
DON'T UNDERESTIMATE ME! I HAVE ALL MY LIMBS BACK TOGETHER.
AH, IT'S WARM!
YEAH...
RIGHT...
Chapter 175 End

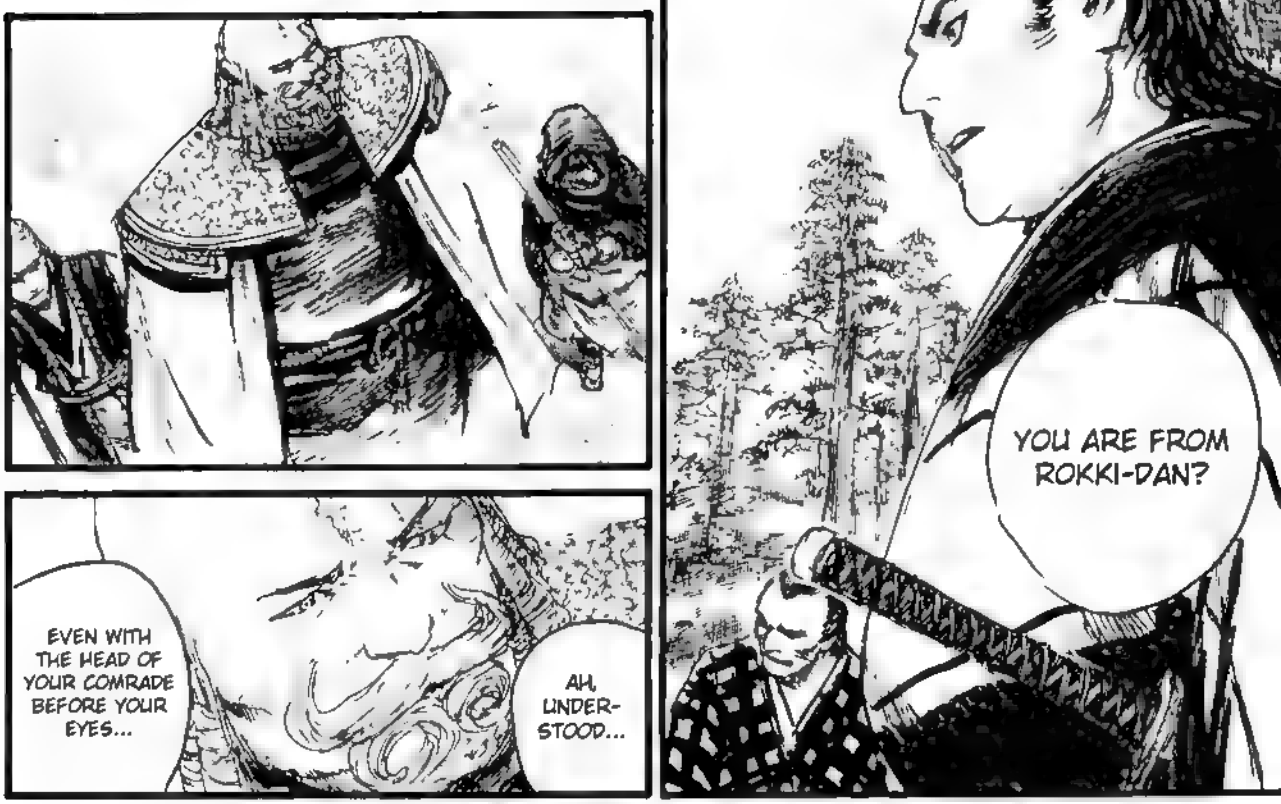
❖Chapter 176:❖
Exertion of Virility
-Part 2-



Goede morgen!



IT'S YATSU-SHIBA!
YATSU-SHIBA!


YOU ARE FROM ROKKI-DAN?
AH, UNDER-STOOD...
EVEN WITH THE HEAD OF YOUR COMRADE BEFORE YOUR EYES...

YOU ARE PERFECTLY DRILLED DOGS.
...A SPONTANEOUS ATTACK IS OUT OF THE QUESTION BECAUSE YOU OUTNUMBER US.

I WILL FOLLOW YOUR RULES.
OKAY THEN...
WHAT?!

WELL, DON'T YOU WANT REVENGE FOR YOUR COMRADE?
IF YOU HAVE THREE TRUMP CARDS THAT ARE COMPARABLE TO US, THEN PLAY THEM.
OUT OF MY WAY!
KCH...
ABAYAMA-SAN...
BASTARDS..!

YOU ARE SOSUKE ABAYAMA?
KAGEHISA ANOTSU...
I HAVE A MESSAGE FOR YOU.
WHAT..!!
...WON'T COME.

A MESSENGER BROUGHT THE NEWS FROM EDO YESTERDAY, THAT HIS CORPSE AND THOSE OF THREE OTHERS WERE IDENTIFIED.
...BUT SUCH AN OUTCOME WAS PREDICTABLE.
DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOUR ESTIMATION...
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING..?
HOW..?
...SHOULD HAVE MET UP WITH US A DAY BEFORE NOW.
...ANOTSU AND THE OTHERS...
TO BE TRUE...

HEY, BALDY!
NO, BULLSHIT!
WHAT? YOU REALLY BELIEVE THIS..?
YOU LIE WHEN YOU OPEN YOUR FILTHY MOUTH!
YOU GOVERNMENT DOGS CAN'T PUT UP AN ACT.
FOR EX-AMPLE...
...BUT YOU MIGHT HAVE CAUSED THIS OCCASION AND THERE AREN'T FOUR CORPSES AT ALL.
IT'S TRUE, ANOTSU AND THE OTHERS ARE LATE...

IF SOMEONE WAS VERY CAUTIOUS...
...HE COULD HAVE KILLED ALL THE HORSES...
...I RESERVED HORSES FOR THEM AFTER EACH RIVER BRIDGE.
TO GIVE THE FOUR A CHANCE TO ADVANCE QUICKLY...
IN THE NAME OF THE GOVERNMENT SUCH A RUDE ACT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE.
...IN EACH AND EVERY POSTAL AND HORSE STATION.
I HEARD THE RUMOR THAT KAGIMURA HABAKI WAS SENTENCED TO COMMIT SEPPUKU.
HE WAS GRANTED A DELAY UNTIL KAGEHISA ANOTSU WAS EXTERMINATED...
WHAT WOULD HAPPEN UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCE OF KAGEHISA ANOTSU'S DEATH?
AND THAT'S WHY YOU IMPLY I'M LYING..?
NO, NO.
I'M ASSURED OF ANOTHER REASON THAT YOU'RE LYING.

I DON'T KNOW WHO OF ROKKI-DAN YOU ARE, BUT IN THIS CASE YOU WOULDN'T HAVE ANY REASON TO CROSS SWORDS WITH US.
HABAKI WOULDN'T WASTE TIME ANYMORE BUT HURRY BACK TO EDO...
...TO PREPARE HIS SEPPUKU.
...THAT KAGEHISA'S FATE IS UNCERTAIN.
THAT YOU ARE STILL PROWLING AROUND HERE, ONLY SHOWS ME...
THAT'S OBVIOUS.
THEN WHY THIS LIE?
AH, I SEE...
GOOD TO KNOW...

...UNTIL KAGIMURA HABAKI ARRIVES.
THESE ASSHOLES ARE HERE TO OBSTRUCT US...
...TO GO TO HITACHI
RIGHT?
WE SHOULD THINK IT WOULDN'T MAKE SENSE ANYMORE...
THAT ONE DAY...
...WE LEFT EDO EARLIER...
...TO CATCH UP WITH US!?
DIDN'T YOU SET OUT...
TELL ME, BALDY...

...THAT KAGEHISA'S GROUP CLOSING IN ON YOURS BEFORE YOU MAKE IT TO US.
NOW YOU HAVE TO AVOID AT ALL COSTS...
YOU MIGHT HAVE KILLED THE RENTAL HORSES...
THEY NEED ONLY TWO WITH FOUR PEOPLE, SO IT MIGHT BE DOABLE.
...BUT THEY ALSO COULD'VE RENTED SOME FROM PEASANTS.
YOU PROBABLY PASSED SOME RIDICULOUS FORCED MARCH BEHIND YOU. DID MORALE ALREADY LEAVE YOUR GROUP?
OF COURSE, YOU HAVE ANTS IN YOUR PANTS...
What? Really!
Is that blood?
ASSUMING I'M CORRECT UNTIL NOW, LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHING...
...SO THERE WON'T BE ANY MISUNDER-STANDING!
THAT WOULD BE AWFUL FOR YOUR GROUP.
EXTERMINATING FOUR OR TEN PEOPLE SEPA-RATELY...
...OR BEING HARASSED BY FOUR AND TEN PEOPLE TOGETHER IS A HUGE DIFFERENCE.

THAT NOT ALL OF US WILL REACH THIS JOURNEY'S GOAL ALIVE WAS FORESEEABLE FROM THE START.
WHETHER KAGEHISA MAKES IT TO US OR NOT, WE WILL GO ON THE SHIP AT HITACHI BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY.
...CAPTAIN OF THE ITTO-RYU.
I HAVE TO PAY YOU RESPECT...
I SEE...
BWAH HA HA HA!
DON'T TALK SHIT, BALDY!
SO WE HAVE COME IN VAIN..!?

YOU KILLED ONE OF MY BOYS.
?
AND YOU TALK ABOUT "COMING IN VAIN"..?
RAINING ON OUR PARADE.
YOU ARE SOME FUNNY GUYS...

SINCE YOU ALREADY CAME HERE, YOU'RE GONNA DIE NOW!

ぱらん

TELL ME THAT WHEN I'M DEAD!
THERE SHOULD BE ONE MORE...
BUT ONE AGAINST THREE ISN'T FAIR.
...ROKKI-DAN WOULD BE ABLE TO DEFEAT ITTO-RYU HERE.
I DIDN'T FANCY MYSELF THAT...
EH, ABAYAMA-SAN...
I'M SORRY TO SAY SO IN THIS SITUATION...
...BUT I'M LEAVING ITTO-RYU.

...I WILL LEAVE AS WELL.
ABAYAMA-SAN...

EH?!

AMON...

EHM, ME TOO.

I BEG YOU TO EXCUSE ME...

I'M GOING.
YOU..?
ME TOO.

...IF THE FIGHTING STARTS THEN IT WON'T APPLY ANYMORE.
ON THE OTHER HAND...
WHAT'S WITH THAT? I TOLD YOU I'LL FIGHT!
CONSIDERING YOUR SKILLS WITH THE SWORD IT'D BE A WISE DECISION...
THE ENEMY WOULD LET NOBODY ESCAPE.
HEY..!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING..?!

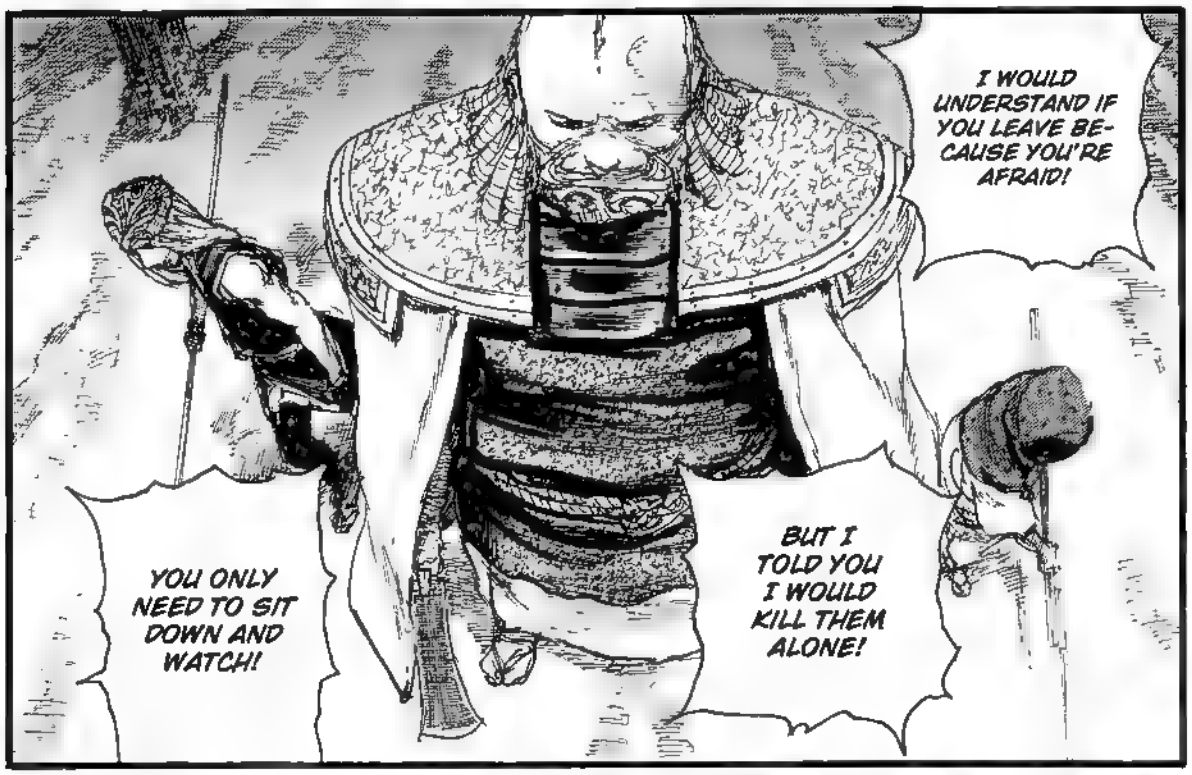
I'M ASKING YOU WHAT'S GOING ON!!
SHINADA! AMON!

Tjonge jonge.
Chapter 176 End

❖Chapter 177:❖
Exertion of Virility
-Part 3-

DAMMIT! I'M ASKING YOU WHAT'S GOING ON!
WITH HOW MANY DO YOU WANT TO ATTACK THE THREE?!
YOU SHOULD KNOW THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF ITTO-RYU!
I DEMAND AN EXPLA-NATION, SHINADA!
...THAT WE HAVE LEFT ITTO-RYU...
THAT'S WHY WE'RE SAYING...

WHAT'S THIS HALF-ASSED SHIT SUPPOSED TO BE?!
WHY DON'T YOU JUST RUN AWAY ?!
FOOLS!
IF IT'S TWO AGAINST ONE OR NOT... WE DON'T NEED TO CARE!

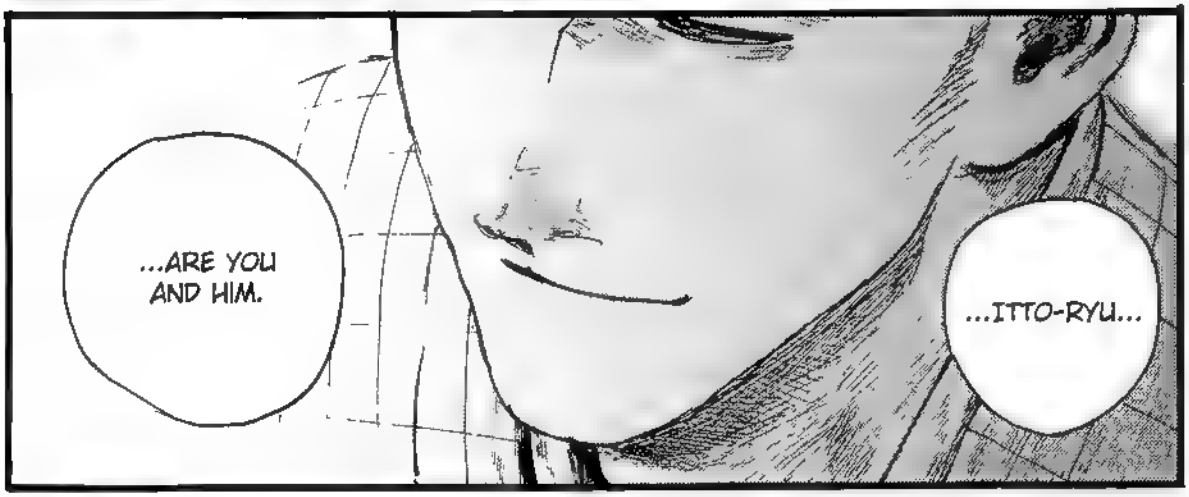

I WOULD UNDERSTAND IF YOU LEAVE BE-CAUSE YOU'RE AFRAID!
YOU ONLY NEED TO SIT DOWN AND WATCH!
BUT I TOLD YOU I WOULD KILL THEM ALONE!

...NOT RETURNING FROM THE ROKKI-DAN HUNT..?
ALSO IN THE LIGHT OF KOJI KASHIN...
DO YOU REALLY THINK YOU CAN DEFEAT THREE OF THE ROKKI-DAN ALONE?
ABAYAMA-SAN...

WE CAN'T LET YOU GET HEAVILY INJURED HERE.
THE FINAL BATTLE AGAINST KAGIMURA HABAKI IS APPROACHING.
IN ADDITION IT'S NOT IMPORTANT HOW YOU'LL WIN.

...HAVE REALIZED THAT...
ABAYAMA-SAN, WE AS WELL...

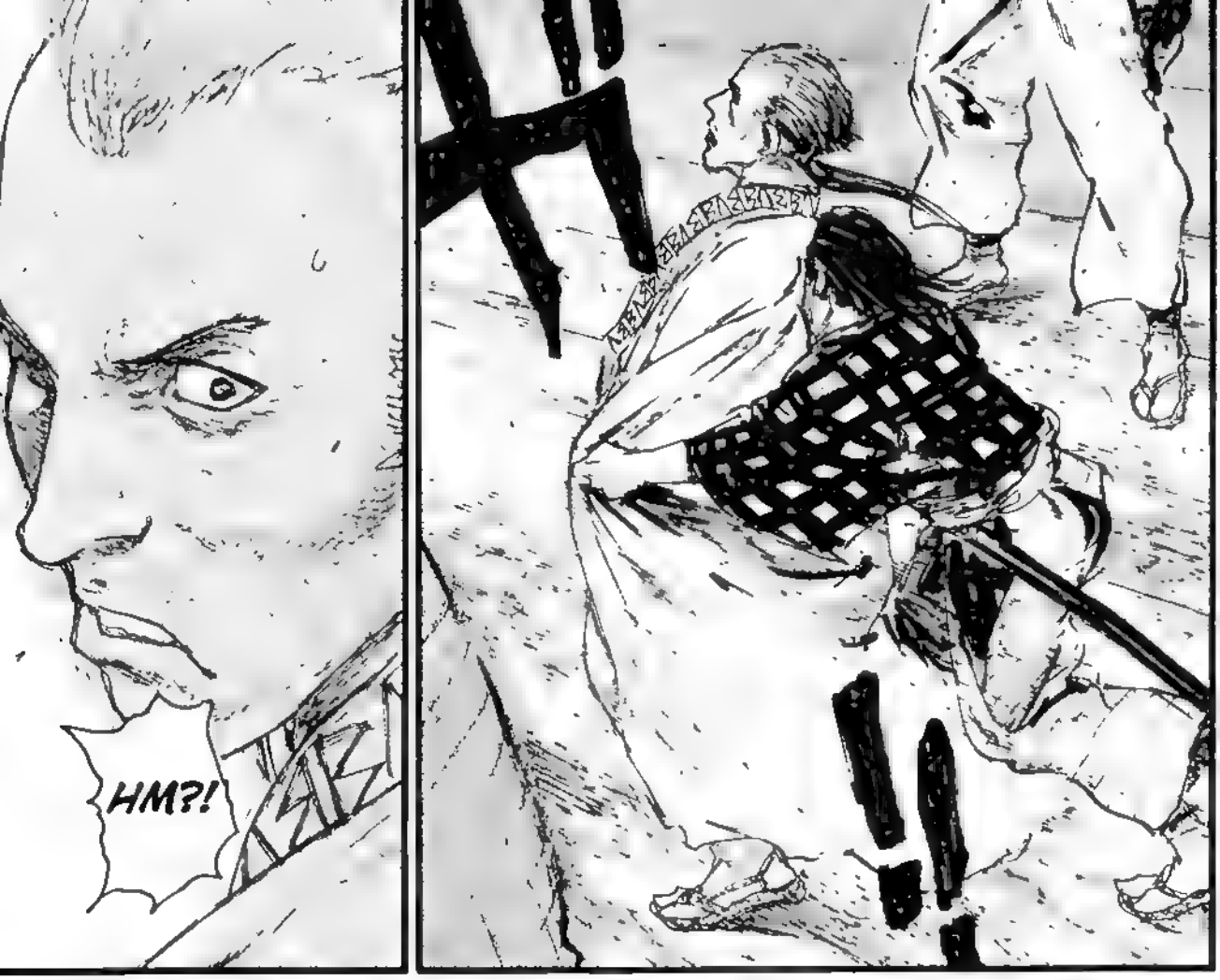
.....


...ARE YOU AND HIM.
...ITTO-RYU...

EVEN IF WE ARE SAFE...
...IF YOU OR ANOTSU-SAN DIED, IT'LL BE OVER FOR ITTO-RYU.

ABAYAMA-SAN...
BUT THAT...
...BUT ALL OF US WHO ARE HERE.
...NOT ONE OF US IS GOOD ENOUGH TO CARRY THE NAME OF ITTO-RYU.
UNFORTU-NATELY...
THAT DOESN'T ONLY APPLY FOR ME...
SINCE THE FIRST ENCOUN-TER ITTO-RYU HAS BEEN MY IDEAL.
WHAT DO YOU THINK I'M TRAINING YOU FOR?!
THAT'S ONLY FOR THE MOMENT!
IT'S HARD TO ADMIT THAT...
WE ACKNOW-LEDGE THAT...
...BUT THE TIME FOR THAT IS OVER.
HOW OFTEN SHOULD AN OLD MAN LIKE ME SAY IT!?
YOU WILL BE NEEDED FOR THE FUTURE OF ITTO-RYU!

YOU MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO..?
WELL...
WE ARE STANDING AT THE ABYSS.
YOU HAVE TO SEPARATE THE USEFUL FROM THE USELESS NOW.
THAT'S WHY WE HAVE ALREADY MADE THIS DECISION IN ADVANCE.
EH?!


HM?!

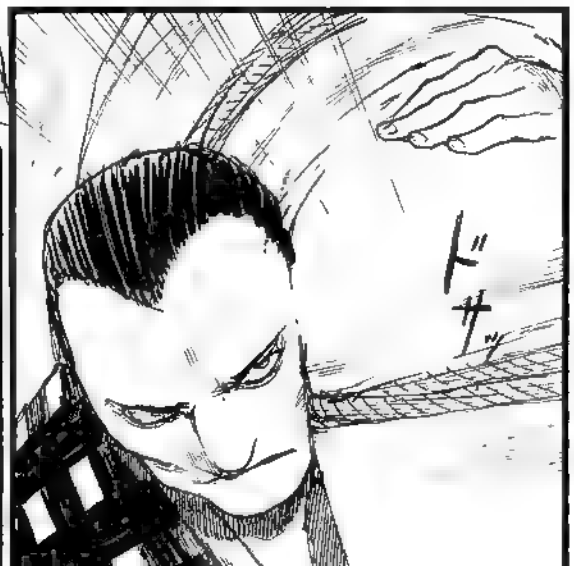
HEY, YOU!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

WHAT'S GOING ON..?
ぎゅ!
HNN-NGH..!
YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN?!
ARIUSU, KODA, YATOIN...

YOU THREE ARE OUR BEST SWORD-FIGHTERS.
PLEASE TAKE GOOD CARE OF ABAYAMA-SAN!

Ah! (note)

I'M SORRY...


ド"

...ABAYAMA-SAN.
I WOULD HAVE LOVED TO STAY AN ITTO-RYU UNTIL THE END...

PLEASE FORGIVE ME!
BUT MY DUTY AS A "PROTECTIVE SHIELD" HAS PRIORITY. THAT'S WHY I HAVE TO USE THESE MEASURES.
WHAT SHOULD I FORGIVE?!
LET ME DOWN, YOU BABOON!!

QUITE SURPRISING, THIS OUT-COME...
.....
.....
HMM...
SHOULDN'T WE FOLLOW AND KILL THEM?
WILL THEY BELIEVE US?
ANOTSU DEAD...

NOTHING SHOULD MAKE THEM DOUBT. THE CHANCES ARE FIFTY-FIFTY.
...IT WILL TURN INTO A FIGHT.
IF THEY BELIEVE IT OR NOT...
?
I DON'T THINK YOUR CHANCES ARE BAD FOR YOU.
WHO KNOWS ..?
HE HE...
IS THAT AN ORDER TO DIE?
SO, AS MANY AS CAN FIT ON TWO HORSES SHOULD FIGHT ALL OF THEM?
IT WAS LEAD BY KAGEHISA ANOTSU.
MITAKE HAS TOLD ME OF THE AMBUSH AT THE PALACE.

IT SHOULD BE ASSUMED THAT THOSE FOUR WHO PLANNED THE AMBUSH ARE CURRENTLY THE STRONGEST FIGHTERS OF ITTO-RYU.
...AND A MASKED MAN WHOSE NAME IS UNKNOWN.
...SUKEZANE BARO...
WITH HIM WAS HIS DEPUTY TAITO MAGATSU...
AS OLD ITTO-RYU FIGHTERS THEY ARE SURELY SPLENDID SWORDFIGHTERS.
...AND THE MAN THAT CONFRONTED RYO AND BAN.
OTHERWISE THE GROUP ON THE MITO-PATH CONSISTS OF VETERANS LIKE ABAYAMA...
TO FIRST TAKE UP A FIGHT WITH HUNDREDS OF GUARDS AND THEN RACE TO HITACHI AS FAST AS POSSIBLE...
THAT'S NOTHING FOR OLD MEN.
...IS A SUICIDAL ACT.
THEY ARE OLD...
WHY BOTH OF THEM WERE NOT PART OF THE AMBUSH TEAM AT THE PALACE IS EASY TO UNDERSTAND.

RIGHT!
IF THAT'S CORRECT...
BUT THE MESSENGER SAID THAT THE GROUP ON THE MITO-PATH CONSISTS OF MANY YOUNG ONES...
...CARRY OUT THIS ACTION WITH ONLY FOUR PEOPLE?
WHY DID ANOTSU HAVE TO...
...THEN WHY WEREN'T THEY PART OF THE AMBUSH GROUP?
...THEY WOULDN'T HAVE STOOD A CHANCE AT SURVIVAL.
AGAINST THE OVERWHELMING NUMBERS OF GUARDS...
PROBABLY BECAUSE THESE YOUNG PEOPLE AREN'T YET GOOD ENOUGH AS SWORDFIGHTERS.

ITTO-RYU HAS SEPARATED ITSELF INTO TWO DIFFERENT GROUPS. TO MISLEAD US, THE RANKS WERE FILLED WITH FAKE MEMBERS.
EITHER PAID MERCENARIES...
...OR OLD HENCHMEN FROM OTHER PROVINCES THAT HURRIED TO HELP ITTO-RYU IN THIS EMERGENCY.
A MOTLEY CREW...
COMPARED TO YOU, WHO HAS BEEN CHOSEN FROM HUNDREDS OF CRIMINALS...
...THEY WON'T STAND A CHANCE.
I SEE...
LISTEN, ARASHINO!
YOU'LL DO IT LIKE THIS...
YOU'LL HAVE TWO HORSES FOR THREE PEOPLE.
THAT'S ENOUGH!
IF YOU CHALLENGE THEM WITH THREE...
...THEN THREE OF THEM WILL LINE UP AGAINST YOU.
IT'S THE BASIC PRINCIPLE OF ITTO-RYU.

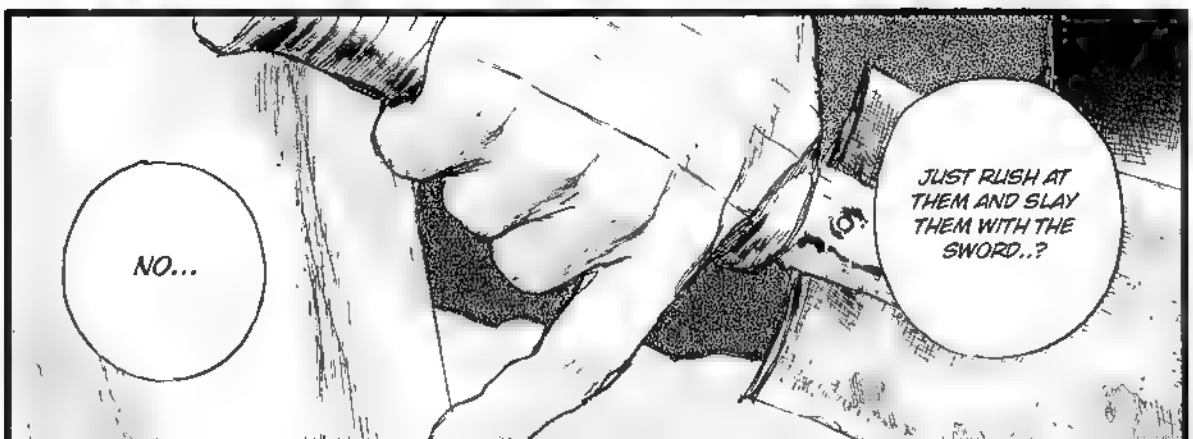
...WILL
SURE. THAT'S
CERTAIN.
YOU WILL HAVE
AS OF YET,
THEY HAVE
ALWAYS
OBLIGED.
AMONG
THE THREE
WHO TAKE
YOU ON...
YOU THREE
AND KILL HIM!
ONCE
THE FIGHT
BEGINS

THE OTHER TWO DON'T MATTER. IGNORE THEM!
IT HAS TO BE QUICK.
CONCENTRATE SOLELY ON KILLING ABAYAMA.
ANOTSU CAN'T AFFORD TO LOSE THE OLD MAN IN THIS CURRENT SITUATION.
AFTER THAT, IF YOU STILL HAVE THE STRENGTH, YOU CAN TRY TO KILL THE OTHERS.
BUT I STILL HAVE ONE QUESTION...
UNDER-STOOD...
SHOULD ONE OF YOU BE HEAVILY INJURED THEN TAKE THE HORSES AND FLEE!
HM?

WHAT SHOULD WE DO IF, IN THIS SITUATION, THEY DROP THEIR PRINCIPLES OF ALWAYS FIGHTING ONE AGAINST ONE?
NEITHER HUMANS OR ANIMALS... YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF THEY GET CORNERED.
IN THIS CASE...
...YOU WILL DIE FOR THE SHOGUN GOVERNMENT.

NOW, HOW SHOULD WE DEAL WITH THIS..?

...BUT THAT THEY WOULD CARRY ABAYAMA AWAY FROM HERE..?
TO GET ATTACKED BY MORE THAN THREE WAS KIND OF PREDICTABLE...


NO...
JUST RUSH AT THEM AND SLAY THEM WITH THE SWORD..?

"WE WON'T LET IT HAPPEN", THAT'S WHAT THEIR EYES'RE SAYING...
IMPOSSIBLE...

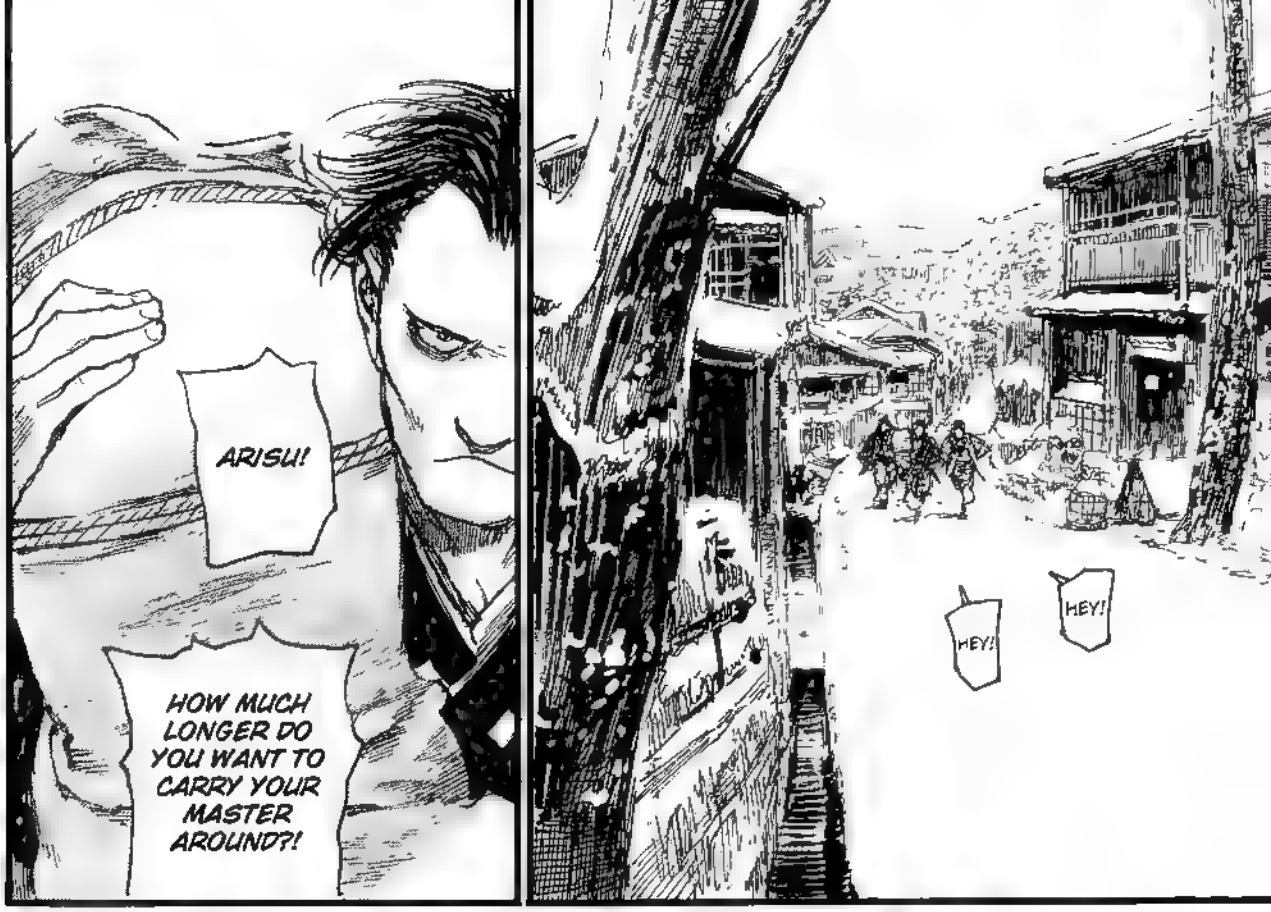
フォン

IF THE ATTACK SUCCEEDS...
...AND WE ARE ABLE TO KILL THEM, THEN THREE OF THEM WILL CONFRONT US...

NOW, IT'S TRICKY...

!

HOW SHAMEFUL!
I'M THE ONLY COWARD!


ARISU!
HOW MUCH LONGER DO YOU WANT TO CARRY YOUR MASTER AROUND?!
HEY!
HEY!

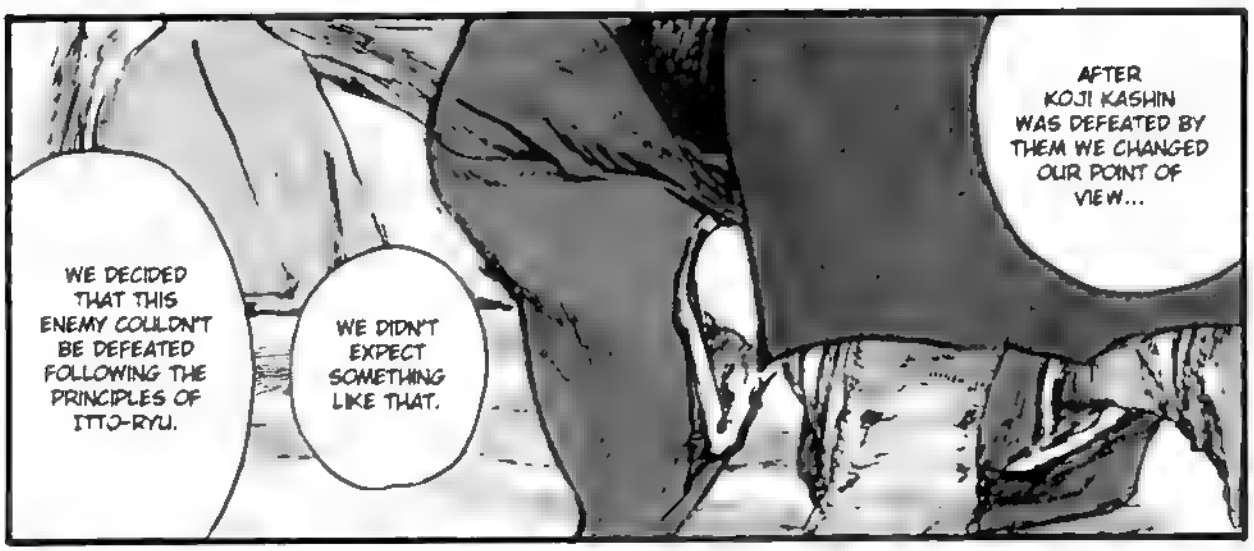
I GIVE UP..! I LOST!
LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!

JUST KEEP ON TALKING!
.....
I GET WHAT YOU'RE THINKING. THAT'S WHY I HAVE AN OFFER FOR YOU!

THEN JUST THROW UP.
I'M GETTING SICK.
HNNGH...
PLEASE STOP..!
AT MY AGE I MIGHT SUFFOCATE ON IT!
ブホー
.....

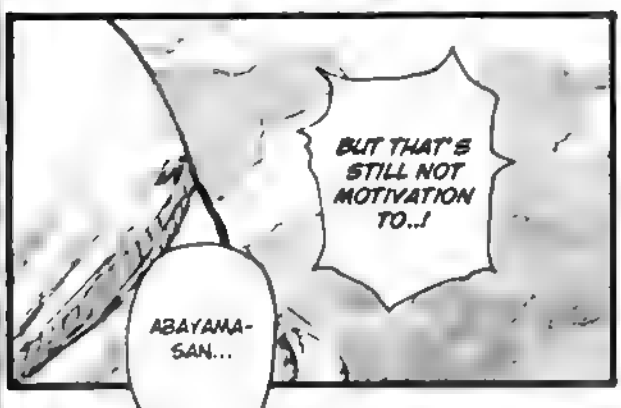
DON'T YOU NEED TO THROW UP?
TELL ME...
...WHOSE IDEA WAS THIS? WHEN DID YOU COME UP WITH IT?
UNGH...
I ASKED WHEN YOU DECIDED THIS!!
YESTERDAY NIGHT, WHEN YOU WENT OUTSIDE...
SHINADA DID...
THAT FUCKING BASTARD!!

ACTUALLY, WE HAD UNDERESTIMATED ROKKI-DAN...
EXCUSE US, ABAYAMA-SAN!


AFTER KOJI KASHIN WAS DEFEATED BY THEM WE CHANGED OUR POINT OF VIEW...
WE DIDN'T EXPECT SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
WE DECIDED THAT THIS ENEMY COULDN'T BE DEFEATED FOLLOWING THE PRINCIPLES OF ITTO-RYU.

YOU SHOULD PUT MORE FAITH IN THE OTHERS.
THEY DIDN'T STAY BEHIND BECAUSE THEY WANTED TO DIE.

ABAYAMA-SAN, YOU TAUGHT US. .
...TO PROTECT OURSELVES, ONLY ENGAGE IN FIGHTS THAT WE CAN WIN.


BUT THAT'S STILL NOT MOTIVATION TO..!
ABAYAMA-SAN...

NATURALLY THEY STOPPED BEING ITTO-RYU FROM THAT POINT.
THEY BELIEVED IT WOULD BE THE BEST WAY TO HELP ALL OF US.

THAT'S MORE IMPORTANT TO US THAN STAYING MEMBERS OF ITTO-RYU.
BUT OUR DEEPEST WISH IS TO KEEP THE IDEA OF ITTO-RYU ALIVE

PLEASE UNDER-STAND OUR FEELINGS!
TODAY WE ARE THANKFUL TO YOU FOR THIS.
ARIYAMA-SAN
YOU ONCE TOLD US IT'S NOT SHAMEFUL TO FLEE IN PROTECTION OF ONESELF.

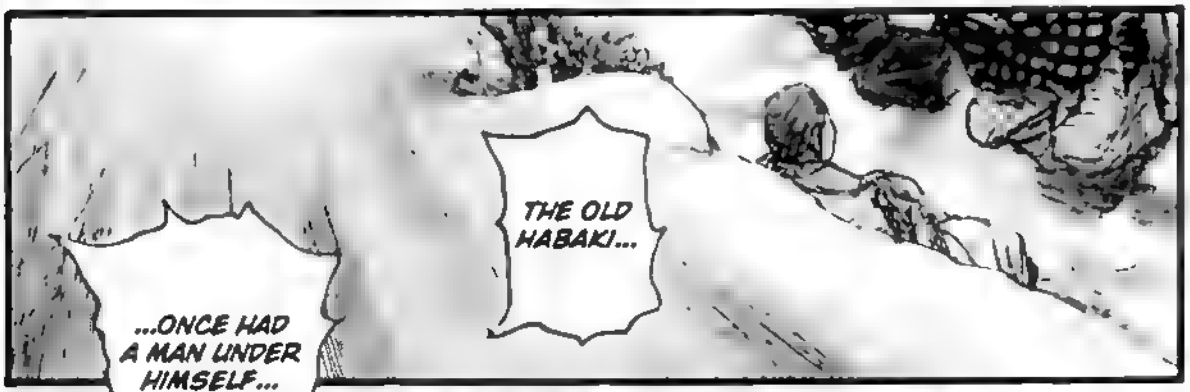
HA! WHAT WOULD BE "THE BEST" OF THIS HALF-BAKED SOLUTION?!
YOU MAY BE RIGHT...
...BUT WE ONLY WANTED THE BEST...
YOU ARE NOTHING BUT A BUNCH OF HALF-WITS!!

...THEN WHY AREN'T YOU WITH THE OTHERS AND FIGHTING ALONGSIDE THEM?!
IF YOU ARE SO EAGER TO OUTNUMBER THE ENEMY IN FIGHTS...
...THAT YOU ARE WILLING TO GIVE UP ITTO-RYU FOR THIS...

THEN ALL OF YOU WOULD BE TOGETHER NOW, YOU IDIOTS!
INSTEAD OF TYING ME UP, YOU COULD HAVE ASKED...
...TO JOIN IN TOO! WHY DIDN'T YOU DO THAT!?

PFUH!
BAH!
YOU ARE SUCH BLOCKHEADS I'M GETTING SICK FROM IT!!
EH, NO, THAT...
FURTHERMORE, IT WAS ALREADY TWO OF US AGAINST ONE OF THEM...

THERE ARE SWORDFIGHTERS THAT ARE SO FAR OFF THE CHART THAT LOSERS LIKE YOU WOULDN'T EVEN STAY A CHANCE AGAINST THEM TEN TO ONE!!
...I WILL EXPLAIN IT TO YOU NOW!
BECAUSE YOU ARE TOO DUMB TO GET IT...


THE OLD HABAKI...
...ONCE HAD A MAN UNDER HIMSELF...

ガッ!

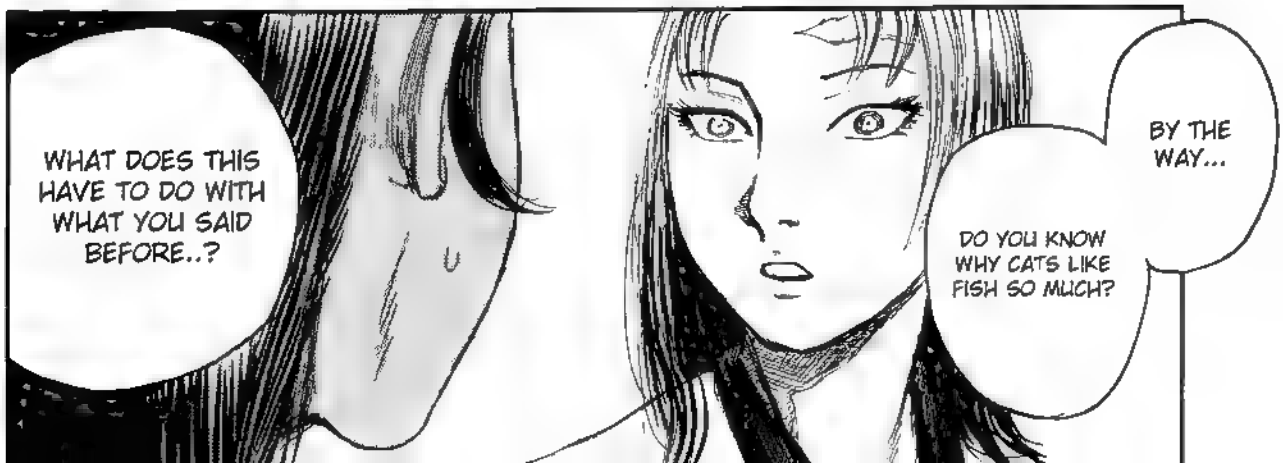
Blade of the Immortal
Volume 26

End

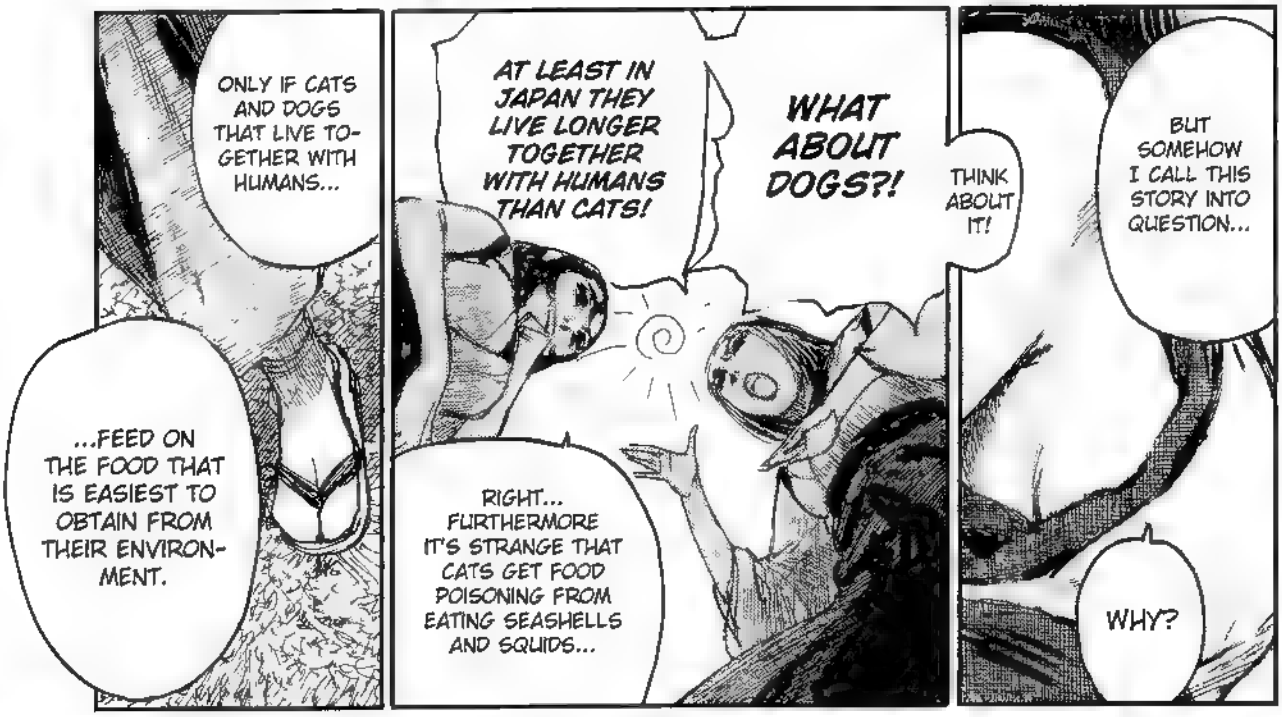
-Omake-

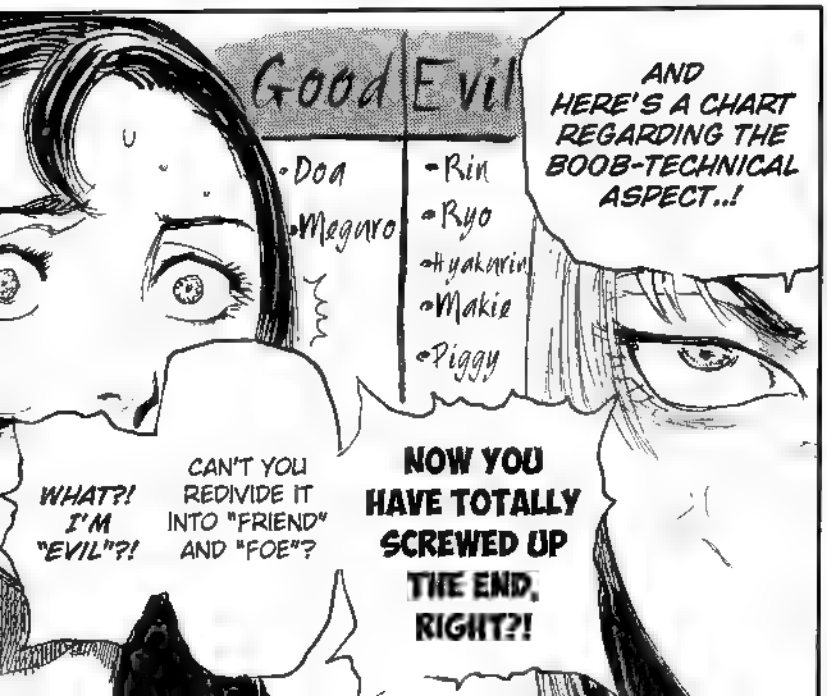
Shinto Girls Omake

False Pearls



THAT'S RIGHT, I HEARD THAT FOREIGN CATS EAT MAINLY FLESH.
EATING FLESH ALONE LETS THEM LIVE LONGER.
IN TRUTH THEY DON'T REALLY LIKE FISH AT ALL...
BUT BECAUSE THE JAPANESE EAT MAINLY FISH THEY AREN'T LEFT TO EAT ANYTHING ELSE.


ONLY IF CATS AND DOGS THAT LIVE TOGETHER WITH HUMANS...
...FEED ON THE FOOD THAT IS EASIEST TO OBTAIN FROM THEIR ENVIRONMENT.
AT LEAST IN JAPAN THEY LIVE LONGER TOGETHER WITH HUMANS THAN CATS!
RIGHT... FURTHERMORE IT'S STRANGE THAT CATS GET FOOD POISONING FROM EATING SEASHELLS AND SQUIDS...
WHAT ABOUT DOGS?!
THINK ABOUT IT!
BUT SOMEHOW I CALL THIS STORY INTO QUESTION...
WHY?


Good
Evil
•Doa
•Megumo
•Rin
•Ryo
•Hyakurin
•Makie
•Piggy
AND HERE'S A CHART REGARDING THE BOOB-TECHNICAL ASPECT..!
WHAT?! I'M "EVIL"?!
CAN'T YOU REDIVIDE IT INTO "FRIEND" AND "FOE"?
NOW YOU HAVE TOTALLY SCREWED UP
THE END, RIGHT?!

AT THIS POINT IT WOULD BE ABOUT TIME TO TALK ABOUT HUMANS THAT EAT DOGS...
SUITS WHAT'S HAPPENED SO FAR...
I KNOW WHAT WE'LL DO NEXT!
Hehehe♡
AH, MEGURO!

沙村広明
発売中タイトル
INFORMATION
1

イート&地球外美少女が太陽系一番の〝爆笑〟をあなたに！

オート!?

経営していた会社が潰れホームレスとなった化野元の前に、突然現れた美少女ヒヨス。彼女の正体は宇宙から来た奇妙な存在だった！不思議なお箸でリアカーから人間まで何でも一瞬で食いまくる。そして吐きまくる……!? 科学大好きなヤンキー女、会社をつぶした張本人たるダメ男、果てはヒヨスの仲間まで加わって、そこらじゅうでシュールにホンワカと荒唐無稽な大騒動！まったりオート系SFコメディ、いよいよ開幕です!!

good!アフタヌーンKC

『ハルシオン・ランチ』①

沙村広明

お気軽イートプライス

定価500円（税込）

沙村広明
発売中タイトル
INFORMATION
2

〈収録作品〉
大学生たちの青春ラブコメ
『おひっこし』
愛と情熱に生きた女一代記
『少女漫画家無宿
涙のランチョン日記』
京都スーパー飲みある記
『みどろヶ池に
修羅を見た』

大傑作青春ラブコメ&more!!

『竹易てあし漫画全集
おひっこし』

沙村広明

アフタヌーンKC
定価550円(税込)

全身全霊をかけたバカ漫画!!　その圧倒的画力で描き出される、恋と笑いと涙の青春残酷物語。
アフタヌーン・シーズン増刊に「竹易てあし」名義で発表し、大評判となった漫画全部入り。
「愚痴っぽくて刹那的。おせっかいなくせに傷つきやすく。経験ないのに知ったかぶって。でも、まっすぐだったあの頃に、もう一度戻ってみたくなりました。――ナチュラル沙村ワールド万歳!!」
(漫画家・藤沢とおる)

〈収録作品〉

大学生たちの青春ラブコメ
『久誓院家最大のショウ』

女子高生による世相風刺
『制服は脱げない』

貴族の「妹」にさせられた少女
『ブリギットの晩餐』

駆け出し漫画家の同棲日記
『シズルキネマ』

実録麻雀漫画
『下層戦略 鏡打ち』

商業誌未発表だった幻の短編
『青春じゃんじゃか じゃかじゃか』

64ページの濃厚西部劇
『エメラルド』

喜怒哀楽全部入りエンターテイメント!

『シスタージェネレーター 沙村広明短編集』

沙村広明

アフタヌーンKC
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"短編の名手"の本領が発揮された
珠玉の読み切りストーリー集!

「月刊アフタヌーン」を始め、様々な雑誌で発表してきた短編が
満を持して一冊に。

『無限の住人』とはひと味もふた味も違う
沙村広明がここにある!

「無限の住人」第26巻は、アフタヌーン'09年10月号から'10年6月号に掲載された作品を収録したものです。

編集部では、この作品に対する皆様の御意見・御感想をお待ちしております。

また、今後「アフタヌーンKC」にまとめてほしい作品がありましたら編集部までお知らせください。

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講談社「アフタヌーン」編集部
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無限の住人 26

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